

**PROTESTANTISM AND PROTEST:
THE LUTHERAN AND REFORMED CHURCHES IN RURAL
EAST GERMANY**

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ABSTRACT.

CURRENT research on the Protestant Church in East Germany can be divided largely between two dominant narratives: 1.) the Church, as both an institution and through the work of individual pastors, provided opportunities to organize opposition to the state and in this way, fostered a nascent public sphere and civil society; or 2.) the hierarchy of the Church was infiltrated top-down by the Stasi, rendering it little more than an institution of state control in an atomized society. Underlying both narratives is an understanding of the Church – and GDR society on the whole – where all actions vis-à-vis the state can be categorized as either opposition or collaboration.

By accessing a theoretical framework articulated in two recent social histories – one on the GDR Protestant Church and another on everyday life in the Soviet Union – my thesis seeks to problematize this simplistic and reductionist binary. In doing so, I argue that opposition and collaboration existed as poles on a spectrum of behavior, within which most Church members operated (although examples of both extremes exist). As my approach seeks to bring a new perspective to a now two decade-old debate, I have found it most useful to look past Church activities and organizations in urban areas; nearly all previous scholarly work examines the Protestant churches in East Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, and Erfurt, and places particular emphasis upon the concluding years of the 1980s. This research, by contrast, analyzes the Protestant Church in rural parishes, with the aim of finding how the Church addressed the unique needs of an agricultural population.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Statement of Copyright.....	ii
Abstract.	iii
Acknowledgments.	iv
Abbreviations.....	vi
Introduction.The Death of Oskar Brüsewitz: 1976	1
1. The Case of Joachim Gauck: New Iterations of an Old Debate?.....	4
2. The Church Between Collaboration and Opposition: Historical Trends.....	9
Chapter I. A “Protestant Revolution?”: Church History as Protest Narrative	18
I.1. Proving a Thesis through Oral History?.....	20
I.2. A History of Protest in the Church, or the Church in Protest?.....	22
I.3. Protest and Dissent as Interpretive Categories	24
I.4. Theoretical Framework and Methodological Considerations.....	26
Chapter II. The Church and Collectivization: Special Ministries in Rural Parishes	30
II.1. Rural Churches in the Midst of Industrialization	36
II.2. GDR Youth Ministries in Rural Parishes	40
II.3. The Social Effects of Collectivization	47
II.4. Pastoral Care in the Collective	51
Chapter III. Parishes and Protest Groups: The Church in Upper Lusatia	54
III.1. The Church and Environmentalism in the “Black Triangle”	55
III.2. The Lausitzbotin and Rural Samizdat Literature	60
Conclusion.....	67
Bibliography.	70
Primary Source Materials	70
Secondary Source Materials	71

ABBREVIATIONS.

AG AadL	Arbeitsgruppe Arbeit auf dem Lande (Working Group for Labor in the the Countryside)
BEK	Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR (Union of Evangelical Churches in East Germany)
BJ	Berufstätige Jugend (Employed Youth)
BRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland (West Germany; see: FRG)
BStU	Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen der Staatssicherheitsdeinstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Federal Commissioner for the State Security Records of the Former GDR)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (East Germany; see: GDR)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (Evangelical Church of Germany)
EKU	Evangelische Kirche der Union (Evangelical Church of the Union)
EZA	Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin (Evangelical Central Archive)
FAK SA	Facharbeitskreis für Schülerarbeit (Special Working Group for Student Ministry)
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany; see: BRD)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany; see: DDR)
IM	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (unofficial [civilian] informant)
IMB	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter der Abwehr mit Feindverbindung (unofficial [civilian] informant of the defense with connection to the enemy)
KadL	Dienst der Kirche auf dem Land (Office of the Church in the Country)
KGD	Kirchenkanzlei für die Gliedkirchen in der DDR (Church Office for the Member Churches of the GDR)
KKJ	Kommission für Kirchliche Jugendarbeit (Commission for Church Youth Work)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft (Agricultural Production Co-operative)
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security or Stasi)
OSA	Open Society Archives
ÖJD	Ökumenischer Jugenddienst (Ecumenical Youth Service)
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Zone of Occupation)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
VELKD	Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (Unified Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany)
WKU	Wehrkundeunterricht (Military Instruction)
WuF	Mittelstelle für Werk und Feier (Center for Work and Celebration)

INTRODUCTION.

THE DEATH OF OSKAR BRÜSEWITZ: 1976

I am convinced that it is related to the fact that we come from churches which attempt to perform their service without any official protection by society, in other words, which have no power. “How does that work?” they ask us, and in this question lies the premonition that they are somehow inquiring about their own future.¹

—Bishop Johannes Hempel, Dresden, 1977

On the morning of 18 August 1976, in the Friedensplatz of Zeitz, Saxony, the Lutheran minister Oskar Brüsewitz, dressed in ecclesiastical robes, exited his car and unfolded a large banner. It bore a clear and pointed critique of the East German educational system: “Message to all: The Church in the GDR denounces communism for its suppression in schools of children and youth!”² Throughout the latter half of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, in response to the introduction of compulsory military instruction in schools imposed by the 1978 policy of Wehrkundeunterricht (Military Instruction, or WKU), members of the GDR Protestant churches would more directly take up Brüsewitz's call to action, working to educate parents that, according to Article 20 of the Constitution, they had the right to request that their children be exempted from such training.³ When these actions failed, and it became obvious that the state would not change its stance regarding the WKU, the Church⁴

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- 1 Johannes Hempel, “Christians in Socialism,” in *East Germany: A New German Nation Under Socialism?*, ed. Arthur W. McCardle and A. Bruce Boenau, (New York: Lantham, 1984), p. 318.
 - 2 “Funkspruch an alle: Die Kirche in der DDR klagt den Kommunismus an wegen Unterdrückung in Schulen an Kindern und Jugendlichen!” Gernot Facius, “Der Fall Oskar Brüsewitz,” *Die Welt*, 18 Aug. 2006, accessed 12 Feb. 2012, <<<http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article146324/Der-Fall-Oskar-Bruesewitz.html>>>. N.B.: English-language editions of published materials have been used wherever possible. In cases where a published translation does not exist, I have provided one, and have included the original German text. In the case of transcripts of interviews, the text is reproduced without editing for dialectical or grammatical irregularities.
 - 3 “Artikel 20 (1)...Gewissens- und Glaubensfreiheit sind gewährleistet. Alle Bürger sind vor dem Gesetz gleich.” (“Article 20 (1)...The freedom of conscience and religious belief are guaranteed. All citizens are equal before the law.”) *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, (East Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1968), p. 2.
 - 4 In referencing “the Church,” I do so meaning those Evangelical (Protestant) Churches that claimed

responded by organizing its own spaces for education: peace evenings, Bible study classes that taught the theological foundations of pacifism, and youth-oriented peace discussions.⁵ But on that Wednesday morning, Brüsewitz stood alone with his banner in front of the Gothic Church of St. Michael. His protest is memorable for what came next.

A small crowd of onlookers had gathered around the pastor: shopkeepers left their stores to get a clearer view of the sign, passersby stopped on their way through the square, and a Volkspolizist (national police officer) made his way over to watch the group. Returning to his car, Brüsewitz removed a canister of petrol from the trunk. After unscrewing the cap, the pastor doused himself with its contents, struck a match, and set himself ablaze. Crying out in pain, he ran toward the church and was tackled before he could enter. Although rushed to a hospital in Halle-Salle, some 50 kilometers to the north, the 47 year-old succumbed to his wounds four days later, on 22 August 1976. Whether Brüsewitz was acting out of protest or despair is not clear—the act seems to be in most immediate response to a conflict with Church leadership (under pressure by the state) over a cross constructed from neon lamps that he had hung in the church. As punishment, Brüsewitz was ordered to remove the cross and was moved to another rectorate.⁶

membership in the Evangelical Church of Germany with its organization in 1948, and after 1969, the Union of Evangelical Churches in East Germany. In doing so, I fully accept – and through this thesis, explore more deeply – the reality that many churches operated with “a considerable autonomy over their activities,” but I have chosen to use the term when it is useful to speak of the Church as an organizational entity. I would like to thank Anna Whittington for helping me problematize my working notion of “the Church” in East Germany. Anna Whittington, “Living in Shades of Gray: Church, State, and Society in the GDR, 1978-1989,” (unpublished paper: Stanford University, 2011), p. 1, fn. 2.

5 Kerry Kathleen Riley, *Everyday Subversion: From Joking to Revolting in the German Democratic Republic*, (East Lansing, Mi.: Michigan State University Press, 2008), p. 101. Military instruction did not begin with the WKU, however. Angela Brock argues that as early as 1952, youth education became increasingly militarized. For example, military drills and first aid classes were inserted into the curriculum of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth, or FDJ), and by 1968, these activities were the basis of annual competitions, the “Hans-Beimler-Wettbewerbe” (“Hans-Beimler Competitions”), for children between the ages of 8 and 10. Angela Brock, “Producing the Socialist Personality? Socialism, Education and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behavior,” in *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: the 'Normalization of Rule?'*, ed. Mary Fulbrook, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 231.

6 Barbara Hammerschmitt and Anne Martin, *Einsichten: Diktatur und Widerstand in der DDR*, (Leipzig: Reklam, 2001), p. 20.

Zeitz, a Gothic town that at this point boasted a population of around 44,000,⁷ seems the unlikely place for such a political demonstration. However, the Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR (Union of Evangelical Churches in East Germany, or BEK), an umbrella organization of East German Protestant Churches, oversaw two separate but affiliated groups that shared responsibility for addressing the unique religious, social, and economic needs of towns, villages, and rural communities. Just one year prior to Brüsewitz's suicide, one of these groups, the Arbeitsgruppe Arbeit auf dem Lande (Working Group for Labor in the the Countryside), had conducted a survey of 232 youth selected from rural parishes across the country, and published its results, with suggestions for local ministers, in a work entitled *Handreichung für die Arbeit mit jungen Erwachsenen in ländlichen Kirchengemeinden* [Helping Hand for Work with Young Adolescents in Rural Parishes]. The survey and resulting essay look at the overall social-economic position of young people and their families, attitudes toward the Church (divided by age group), educational opportunities available to high school graduates, and career possibilities for those living in areas experiencing rapid industrialization.⁸ But if Brüsewitz ever encountered the *Handreichung*, he clearly found its recommendations an inadequate response to the needs of East German youth.

In the aftermath of Brüsewitz's self-immolation, members of the Evangelische Kirche der Kirchenprovinz Sachsen [Dresden] (Protestant Regional Church in Saxony [Dresden]) met to discuss the role of the Church and the model of the Christian life in socialist society.⁹ One year later, in October 1977, this topic was taken up at a synod-wide

7 *Statistical Pocket Book of the German Democratic Republic*, (East Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1976), p. 14.

8 KkJ / AG AadL, *Handreichung für die jungen Erwachsenen in ländlichen Kirchengemeinden*, Nov. 1976, BEK, B.101/1848, microfiche, EZA.

9 The Church maintained its organization along eight historical state lines, despite the fact that the GDR was rearranged into fifteen new administrative districts. Five of the eight regional Churches within East

meeting. In his remarks to the attendees, Bishop Johannes Hempel of Dresden observed that the situation was by no means hopeless, and, rather than viewing Brüsewitz's death as proof of a crisis in Church-state relations, concluded that there were many signs of “renewal, growth and strength” for the Church despite the restrictions placed upon it by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, or SED).¹⁰ Drawing upon his personal experiences with laymen of his congregation, he commented that they were often “filled with greater hope [for the Church than his] ordained colleagues.”¹¹

1. THE CASE OF JOACHIM GAUCK: NEW ITERATIONS OF AN OLD DEBATE?

Placed in contrast, the figures of Brüsewitz and Hempel provide competing examples of the ways in which members of the Lutheran clergy understood their position and function within East Germany. In the present, this contrast continues to raise questions regarding the legacy of the East German Lutheran and Reformed Churches under state socialism, the most important being: did the Church function in a oppositional or collaborationist capacity? These questions, and the competing answers proffered, are not relegated to the annals of academic obscurity; rather they have a unique valence in contemporary German politics, situated at the intersection of public memory and scholarly research. Access to archives of

Germany – Anhalt, Berlin-Brandenburg (which during the 1950s included West Berlin), Saxony (Magdeburg), Görlitz, and Greifswald – were members of the Evangelische Kirche der Union (Evangelical Church of the Union, or EKU), formed on 1 August 1951, and claimed Prussian heritage (the original version of the name included the words, “der altpreußischen,” or “old Prussian”) and Reformed tradition. It is a common narrative among ministers of the former EKU and historians that this Reformed tradition entailed greater political and social involvement, however, the theological justification for this assertion is problematized later in the introduction. For example, the pastor of Berlin's Zionskirche, Hans Simon, suggested that it was easier to arrange protest activities in the churches of Berlin because they were not strictly Lutheran Churches, but rather Reformed “Union” Churches. See: Hans Simon, interview by Christian Joppke, personal interview, Berlin, 25 June 1991, Joppke Box 1, transcript, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. The remaining three regional Churches – Mecklenburg, Saxony (Dresden), and Thuringia – were joined as the Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (Unified Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany, or VELKD), an organization formed in 1948 in the city of Eisenach, Thuringia, and one that followed a stricter interpretation of Luther's teachings. In the political realm, this meant that “the Church and state have different tasks and the Church should acknowledge the state as God's instrument in the secular realm...” Wendy Tyndale, *Protestants in Communist East Germany: In the Storm of the World*, (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2010), p. 24.

10 McCardle and Boenau, “Church and State in the GDR,” in *East Germany: A New German Nation Under Socialism?* (see p. 1, fn. 1), p. 310.

11 Hempel, “Christians in Socialism,” in *East Germany: A New German Nation Under Socialism?*, p. 318.

the former East Germany has not given a clearer picture of the Church, but on the contrary, has instigated intensely bitter controversy at nearly every level of discourse. As individual ministers, theologians, and bishops held differing views on the appropriate role of the Church in East German society, constructing a history of the GDR Protestant Church continues to be a task that engages the efforts of numerous academics, public intellectuals, and religious leaders.

From recent political developments in Germany, the election of Joachim Gauck illustrates the point most clearly. On 20 February 2012, Gauck, a retired East German Lutheran minister and former Federal Commissioner for the State Security Records of the Former GDR (Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, or BStU; more colloquially, the Stasi Archives), was nominated by a nonpartisan consensus of some five major parties to become the new president of Germany. His nomination and eventual election is noteworthy for a number of reasons.¹² As he serves alongside Chancellor Angela Merkel, a fellow former East German, this marks the first time since the Wiedervereinigung (reunification) that both offices have been filled by individuals from the new Bundesländer (Federal States), at a time when Germany has assumed a greater role in leadership of the European Union. Furthermore, Gauck's work with the BStU is not without criticism, although, considering the sensitivity of the material contained within its archives (and how destructive such materials are for individuals who are implicated in cooperation with the East German state police), this is not entirely surprising.¹³ But by far the most conversation has centered on Gauck's

12 Gauck secured 991 out of a total 1228 votes cast by the members of a special committee (comprised of representatives and lawmakers) on 18 March 2012. "Joachim Gauck ist neuer Bundespräsident," *Tagesschau*, 19 Mar. 2012, accessed 4 Apr. 2012, <<<http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/bundespraesidentenwahl210.html>>>.

13 It remains a matter of controversy what role the BStU should "appropriately" play in the confrontation of the "cumbersome legacy" of the state socialist past. Manfred Stolpe, the Premier of the State of

time in the Church. Despite receiving substantial support throughout the country, his nomination and subsequent election has initiated a new round of analysis and historical examination of the role of the East German Protestant Church under communism.

“History,” and especially East German history, Mary Fulbrook reminds the reader, “is not an exact science;”¹⁴ the history of the Protestant Church in East Germany certainly bears out this assertion. Gauck himself has suggested in a 1993 interview that, “The heroes are few and the martyrs are few, and in between are many shades of gray.”¹⁵ Even among those critics who argue that the Church functioned in an oppositional capacity, there are many who have placed individual ministers and bishops under scrutiny as to whether they in fact facilitated pacifist, environmentalist, and other protest-oriented activity, often in spite of the Church's official policy toward the state. To give but one example, the retired minister Hans-Jochen Tschiche, who was a member in peace movements and opposition groups as early as 1968 (while serving as the head of the Evangelical Academy in Magdeburg), has criticized the new Bundespräsident (Federal President) precisely on these terms, arguing that as a minister, Gauck had a responsibility to engage his parishioners not only spiritually, but

Brandenburg from 1990 until 2002 and the former Head of the Secretariat of the Conference of Governing Bodies of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR from 1962 until 1969, “took Gauck to court after the latter had claimed in an interview that it was only in the state of Brandenburg that the evidence which had been brought against Stolpe would be regarded as insufficient to force his resignation.” Barbara Miller, *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance in Unified Germany: Stasi informers and their impact on Society*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 83. Stolpe was certainly an informant to the Stasi to some degree, but he defended his collaboration by arguing that such action was necessary in order for the state to allow any communication between Protestant Churches in East and West Germany. Stolpe was eventually cleared, but neither he nor Gauck emerged from the trial unscathed; Stolpe later served as the Federal Minister of Transport, Building, and Housing from 2002 through 2005. In any case, the conflict over Stolpe demonstrates the same difficulty faced by those who attempt to fit Gauck into the collaborationist or oppositional paradigms of the Church.

14 Mary Fulbrook, “The Limits of Totalitarianism: God, State and Society in the GDR,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, vol. 7, (1997), p. 28.

15 “Die Helden sind rar und die Märtyrer sind rar, und dazwischen gibt es auch noch viele Schattierungen.” Joachim Gauck, interview by John C. Torpey, personal interview, Berlin, 23 Apr. 1993, GDR Oral History Project Box 2, transcript, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Here, Gauck is responding to a question on the topic of Christa Wolf, one of East Germany's most prominent literary figures whose often critical positions towards state leadership belied her then-secret work as an Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (unofficial [civilian] informant, or IM) from 1959-61. This information only became public over three decades later, through the work of the BStU, in 1993.

politically as well, and ultimately did not do enough to oppose the governing order. As Tschiche writes, “But in the opposition that emerged under the roof of the Church, I never came across him.”¹⁶ Tschiche's words grow only more condemnatory throughout the article, characterizing Gauck as a well-dressed, bourgeois, political opportunist who only joined the Church-led peace movement at a time when it was no longer politically risky for him to do so.¹⁷

Klaus Huhn, who was once the most influential sports journalist of the GDR, utilizes Tschiche's critique extensively in his book, *Die Gauck-Behörde: Der Inquisitor zieht ins Schloss* [The Gauck Commission: the inquisitor moves into the castle], published immediately after the election. In *Die Gauck-Behörde*, Huhn attempts to portray Gauck as a self-interested capitalist who, because of his involvement in the organization of the BStU, has assumed a self-righteous attitude regarding his interactions with the state under socialism. As Huhn argues, Gauck's controversial political sentiments are evidenced by recent comments he made concerning the Occupy movements. Huhn quotes a 20 February 2012 editorial by Florian Festl for *Focus*, which highlights the irony of Gauck's alleged protest past and his current criticism of contemporary youth movements: “He, the freedom fighter, criticized the activists of the Occupy movement. He has declared them 'unspeakable idiots' in their protest against the power of the banks and prophesied that, 'This will subside

16 “Aber in der entstehenden Opposition unter dem Dach der Kirche ist er mir nie begegnet.” Hans-Jochen Tschiche, “DDR-Vergangenheit von Gauck: Joachim, der Lokomotivführer?,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27. Feb. 2012, accessed 3 Apr. 2012, <<<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/ddr-vergangenheit-von-gauck-joachim-der-lokomotivfuehrer-1.1294021>>>.

17 Tschiche also uses particularly strong words in his evaluation of Gauck's handling of the BStU: “Eine bohrende Frage für Politiker: Wie legitim ist das Wirken im Verborgenen, am Rande der Legalität? Die Behörde von Gauck war eigentlich gegründet worden, um Opfer zu rehabilitieren, Täter zu entlarven und die DDR im kollektiven Bewusstsein als Unrechtsstaat festzuschreiben. Eine Versöhnungskommission aber hat Joachim Gauck nie gefordert.” [“A nagging question for politicians: how legitimate is work in secrets [of the Stasi], at the edge of legality? Gauck's authority was really established in order to rehabilitate victims, to expose perpetrators, and to lay out to the collective memory the GDR as an unjust state. But Joachim Gauck never demanded a reconciliation commission.”] *Ibid.*

quickly.”¹⁸ Such comments, critics like Huhn argue, reflect the underlying incoherency of Gauck's self-proclaimed “left-liberal-conservative” (“linker liberaler Konservativer”) politics.¹⁹

The debate around Gauck thus fits within a larger, but nevertheless equally inconclusive history of the Protestant Church under state socialism, in which figures such as Brüsewitz and Hempel are connected to supposedly oppositional modes of thought vis-à-vis Church-state relations. For those historians and religious leaders who argue that the Church under communism acted in an oppositional capacity, Brüsewitz has been held up as a martyr. Indeed, in some circles the pastor from Rippicha has become something of an East German Óscar Romero, the Salvadorean Catholic Bishop who was assassinated on 24 March 1980 for speaking out against government oppression and human rights abuses. In 2000, the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church of Germany, or EKD), a federation of some 22 Lutheran, Unified and Calvinist regional church organizations in Germany, in conjunction with the Catholic Deutsche Bischofskonferenz (German Bishops' Conference), published *Zeugen einer besseren Welt: Christliche Märtyrer des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Witnesses to a Better World: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century]. The book includes a chapter on the incident in Zeitz. Six years later, at the Leipziger Buchmesse (Leipzig Book Fair), the EKD released a volume on Protestant martyrs. This

18 “Er, der Freiheitskämpfer, kritisierte die Aktivisten der Occupy-Bewegung. Als 'unsäglich albern' befand er ihren Protest gegen die Allmacht der Banken und prophezeite: 'Das wird schnell verebben.'” Florian Festl, “Künftiger Bundespräsident: Wie tickt Joachim Gauck eigentlich?,” *Focus*, 20 Feb. 2012, accessed 12 May 2012, <<http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/bundespraesident/kuenftiger-bundespraesident-wie-tickt-joachim-gauck-eigentlich_aid_715885.html>> as quoted in Klaus Huhn, *Die Gauck-Behörde: Der Inquisitor zieht ins Schloss*, (Berlin: spotless, 2012), p. 12.

19 Huhn's interactions with Gauck require some comment, and shed light on why *Die Gauck-Behörde* was written in the first place. Through information made available by the BStU (then headed by Gauck), Huhn was discovered to have signed a contract to work as an unofficial informant to the Stasi, beginning in 1960, under the pseudonym “Heinz Mohr.” Huhn was responsible for preparing Einschätzungsberichte (assessment reports) that named athletes deemed “nicht zuverlässig” (“unreliable”), because they were suspected of wanting to emigrate illegally. Huhn claims no memory of signing such a document. “DDR Journalist Klaus Huhn war Stasi-Spitzel,” *Focus*, 6 Nov. 1995, accessed 12 May 2012, <<http://www.focus.de/magazin/archiv/ddr-journalist-klaus-huhn-war-stasi-spitzel_aid_154495.html>>.

work also includes a chapter on Brüsewitz. While rejecting Brüsewitz's status as a martyr, the historian and specialist in contemporary Lutheran affairs Harald Schultze casts the pastor as a hero, willing to sacrifice all, in the struggle to challenge and change the Marxist-dominated education system. A martyr, after all, is one who is put to death by another; Oskar Brüsewitz, by contrast, was motivated by a sincere love for children and youth, and chose to give his life as an act of protest. "It was a sacrifice that he thought he should make," Schultze concludes.²⁰

2. THE CHURCH BETWEEN COLLABORATION AND OPPOSITION: HISTORICAL TRENDS

Historians such as Kerry Kathleen Riley, while admitting that there existed "two languages to be heard: a traditional, state-serving theology and a politically critical Christianity," generally understand the Church to constitute the institutional opposition to state authority by "[sharing] physical and rhetorical resources [with pacifists], particularly with regard to oppositional stances, strategies, and symbols."²¹ In this capacity, the Church was much more than a meeting space. Its leaders, like Brüsewitz, acted as "'moderator,' 'mediator,' [and] 'representative'" of grassroots peace movements, and in doing so fortified the church as 'midwife,' 'sanctuary,' 'shelter,' 'free space,' 'second public,' and 'crystallization point'" of the eventual revolution of 1989.²² By organizing events such as the 1980 pan-German Ten Days of Peace, the Church brought the discussion of oppositional politics and other forms of "politically engaged social interaction" into a quasi-public realm, and the thousands of participants "represented the beginning of the social articulate audiences necessary for the

20 "Es war ein Opfer, das er meinte bringen zu sollen." Sandra Voglreiter, "Das Fanal von Zeitz," *Der Spiegel*, 3 Nov. 2006, accessed 28 Mar. 2012, <<<http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/0,1518,446133,00.html>>>.

21 Kerry Kathleen Riley, *Everyday Subversion*, p. 120.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 91. Riley, even while accessing all of these metaphors, seems to have some difficulty accepting them wholeheartedly. The quote that best captures her understanding of the Church is as follows: "It is only because the Church struggled to survive and serve the people of the GDR that it was in a position to be the *halfway house* [emphasis added] of the revolution."

creation of a civil society.”²³

While Riley only gives cursory attention to the “double language” of the Church under communism (that is to say at once subservient to and critical of the state), a language which Bishop Hempel clearly made his own, it is precisely this paradoxical rhetoric that is of chief interest to Marilyn Thomas. There was the possibility of a “relatively harmonious relationship,” she claims, with “both sets of believers [those of communism and of Christianity] sharing creeds, such as a desire for peace and the need to care for the world's less fortunate.”²⁴ The traditional Lutheran understanding that there exists two parallel sources of authority, one secular and the other spiritual, certainly allowed for the possibility of cooperation.

As Thomas continues, for some parishioners this meant “that it was a Christian's duty to support the authority of the state in its governance of the country;” the “most damning evidence” of complicity was some Church members' connection with the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security; MfS or Stasi).²⁵ She further describes a competing wing within the Church that, inspired by the tradition of Calvinist Protestantism, justified opposition to the state as it acted against God's will.²⁶ The structure

23 *Ibid.*, p. 119. The ways in which the church as a cultural forum helped foster an emergent civil society in Wende-era (“The Turn,” or the transition from state socialism to parliamentary democracy and market economy) East Germany is more thoroughly considered in the works of Charles Maier. See: Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

24 Marilyn Thomas, “The evangelical church in the German Democratic Republic,” in *The Workers' and Peasants' State: Communism and Society in East Germany under Ulbricht 1945-71*, ed. Patrick Major and Jonathan Osmond, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 210.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 213, 224.

26 Delineating a theological justification for opposition to the state from the writings of Calvin requires some explanation. As Calvin himself explained in the *Instituts de la Religion Chrétienne*, resistance was condemned on the grounds that “it involves rebellion against that order which, because it is there, must be so by divine dispensation. The magistrate is 'vicaire de dieu' and to resist him is to resist the ordinance of God.” M.J. Tooley, “The Calvinists and the doctrine of resistance,” in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 3, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 499. However, in the final section of the *Instituts*, Calvin admits the right of resistance by ordinary subjects in justifying Daniel's refusal to submit to the king's impious command {Dan. 6:22}, as the king had exceeded his limits not only by injuring mankind, but God as well.

of the Church, which granted considerable latitude to individual churches and ministers to operate as they chose, allowed for both positions to develop side-by-side. Thus, when approaching the question of whether or not the Church acted as an oppositional or collaborationist force, Thomas answers both, but situates this within a periodized schematic: Church-state cooperation was likely higher in the post-Ulbricht years (that is to say, after the death of General Secretary Walter Ulbricht in 1973), because a “new breed of Churchmen came to the fore, younger men who had not experienced the 1930s or the Second World War and who many well have been more willing to bend with the wind than those who had had to fight for their beliefs on more than one occasion.”²⁷

This generational divide, centered on 1971, is reiterated by some members of the clergy who served under communism, although the rationalization of its existence differs from that provided by Thomas. In an 1990 interview, Klaus Kanden – a Lutheran pastor who was born in 1951 in Karl Marx Stadt (thus of the generation of Thomas's “new breed of Churchmen”) and served as a youth minister in Leipzig starting in 1987 (thus personally responsible for facilitating many of the political debates that occurred at the Nikolai Kirche during the final years of the GDR) – expresses dismay at the number of pastors who still harbor sympathies for the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism, the successor to the SED). Kanden posits that many of these “left-liberal people” attended college or seminary during the '68 revolution, and coming out of it, “talk[ed] about a theology that was basically socialist.”²⁸ This year also marked a turn in the official

27 Thomas, “The evangelical church in the German Democratic Republic,” p. 224. Jürgen Kocha, although providing a different explanation, also argues that the generational politics of the Church had an influence on its relationship with opposition movements. As there was a degree of continuity between in Church leadership before and after the founding of the state, this older generation of pastors “preserve[d] residues” of an educated *Bildungsbürgertum* (middle-class culture) in “a social environment that was trying to break with its middle-class bourgeois past.” As he continues, “Part of this milieu offered protection to dissident groups in the 1980s.” Jürgen Kocha, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German Society*, (Lebanon, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 2010), p. 49.

28 Dirk Philipsen, *We Were the People: Voices from East Germany's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989*, (Durham,

discourse of the Church regarding its relations with the state. During the conferences setting the framework for the organization of the BEK, the Church agreed to a statement affirming it as “a Church within socialism,” stating on 15 February 1968 that: “As citizens of a socialist state, we face the task of manifesting socialism as more just form of social co-existence.”²⁹ Although the political climate of the seminaries would change again by 1971, the influence of those ministers who studied during this time would have lasting implications. Kanden clarifies that this “decisive role” had implications in the way that members of the Church hierarchy supported – and in many cases, according to Kanden, did not support – local Basisgruppen (grass-roots movements) and Ausreisewillige (so-called would-be emigrés). “At bottom,” Kanden reminds the interviewer, “we have to realize, however, that there were about ten to twelve pastors in Leipzig—out of about eighty—who became actively involved in the oppositional efforts. Throughout the country I don't think that there were more than about 100 pastors worth mentioning...”³⁰

However, Kanden's interview problematizes this very periodization: to give just one example, even in the midst of East Germany's “Revolutionary Autumn,” one of the superintendents of the Nikolai Kirche, Friedrich Magirius, “was still praising, clearly and explicitly, socialism as 'the only good alternative to capitalism.’”³¹ Magirius, born in 1930 in Dresden, falls within Thomas's Ulbricht-era Churchmen and Kanden's pre-'68 generation. What is more significant is an analysis of whether religious leaders of this generation participated in a unified resistance to National Socialism—Thomas's explanation only holds if members of the Protestant Church had, in fact, opposed the Third Reich. (Answers to this question are arguably as inconclusive as those given regarding the Protestant Church under

N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 150.

29 Gerhard Besier, *Religion, State and Society in the Transformations of the Twentieth Century*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), p. 66.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 354.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

communism.)

To support her claim, Thomas points to Otto Dibelius, the Bishop of Brandenburg-Berlin, who had been a member of the Bekennende Kirche (or Confessing Church, a schismatic group that resisted attempts by the Third Reich to Nazify the Protestant Church), and was one of the most vocal critics of the East German regime. In a particularly famous essay, Dibelius attacked the new GDR government as little more than “another form of dictatorship that had to be opposed as vigorously as Hitler's Third Reich.”³² However, Thomas mistakenly suggests that a majority of Protestant ministers in the 1930s claimed membership in the Bekennende Kirche. Representing just as large a membership (each having a roster of nearly 3,000 ministers of a total of 18,000) were the Deutsche Christen who not only supported the Third Reich, but “intended to build a church that would exclude all those deemed impure and embrace all 'true Germans' in a spiritual homeland for the Third Reich.”³³ Doris Bergen notes that the Deutsche Christen were not a puppet organization of the National Socialists, but was rather comprised of church people who believed that purifying the Church required a reorganization based around “race” and “blood” rather than baptism.

In any case, the conflicting histories told by Riley, Thomas, and Kanden all demonstrate the remarkable complexity of the relationship between the Lutheran Church and communist state. The East German theologian and politician Richard Schröder posits that was due not only to the atheism espoused in Marxist-Leninism, but also from the misunderstanding that Russian Communists had vis-à-vis the Lutheran Church and its involvement in the community. As Schröder states, “The Communists who took over in 1945 were trained in Russia...Their model was the Russian Orthodox Church, which

32 Tyndale, *Protestants in Communist East Germany*, p. 24.

33 Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 4.

focuses heavily on the liturgy. By contrast, Protestant churches have always been a wide field that included Bible study and other discussion groups.”³⁴ But this extended to a wide array of activities outside church walls. As he continues, “All the charity work of the Protestant churches, like their hospitals, were started by what you might call grass roots movements of congregation members. They were not started by the churches themselves. But the Communists always tried to handle us as if we were Russian Orthodox.”³⁵

The contrast in Protestant and Orthodox practice and civic involvement highlights a single dimension of the many that makes the case of the GDR Lutheran Church a unique one in the comparative study of religion under communism. Unlike many churches throughout the communist bloc, those of East Germany were never dispossessed of their property – despite the process of collectivization and normalization of agricultural property, the churches together held some 510,000 acres of land, and from these holdings could collect incomes from farming and logging. Perhaps most surprising is the fact that the state continued to give direct subsidies to churches, and to a limited extent, made materials and labor available for restoration work on places of worship which were deemed historically significant. A considerable portion of many individual church's operational funds, however, came from donations made by religious organizations in West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG).³⁶

In evaluating the two dominant narratives of the Church and its role in East German society, here typified by Riley and Thomas, it is useful to examine the ways in which the state provided official avenues for criticism, even if decidedly controlled and restricted—giving further evidence of the exceptionally complex relations under which these two

34 Tom Heneghan, “How East Germany's communists misunderstood its Protestants,” *Reuters*, 9 Nov. 2009, accessed 3 Feb. 2012, <<<http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2009/11/09/schroeder/>>>.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Wolfgang Koschnick, “East Germany: The Great Divide – Where Church and State co-exist in precarious balance,” *Third Way*, vol. 1, no. 4, 24 Feb. 1977, p. 4.

institutions operated. Churches in East Germany had limited opportunities for independent news media, and by the mid-1970s, there numbered at least five Protestant and two Catholic weeklies. Religious services were broadcast on the state radio station on Sunday mornings. It is of course easy to overstate these liberties; all of these enterprises were subject to Stasi inspection and infiltration. However, comments made by Ulbricht in 1961 do seem to point to a genuine wish for cooperation between the Church and state: “I am coming more and more to the conclusion...that socialists, communists, and Christians – regardless of their different ideologies – belong together and simply have to cooperate in shaping life and society and to a secure world of place.” He further appeals to the common humanitarian cause which both professed, stating, “A Christian who takes his humanist and social ideas seriously, who frees himself from prejudice and the encumbrance of a dead past, should not be able to do otherwise than unite with socialism.”³⁷

The Protestant Church, after all, had a central place not only in the history of the region that would become East Germany, but also, as the state argued, for socialism itself. Of particular importance was the Reformation theologian and rebel leader Thomas Müntzer. As interpreted by communist historians from Friedrich Engels to those of East Germany, Müntzer, through his teachings on common property ownership (put into practice during his leadership of Mühlhausen), was an early leader in the bourgeois revolution, and thus became an important figure in the history of class war. On 9 September 1973, the Central Committee of the SED chose to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Battle of Frankenhausen (where Müntzer was captured) by commissioning “a great monument and work of art that would evoke the mood of that uprising and the struggles between the people, the feudal nobility and the church authorities.”³⁸ On 1 January 1976, Werner Tübke was

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Brian Keith-Smith, “Werner Tübke,” in *German Monitor Retrospect and Review: Aspects of the Literature*

commissioned to complete this work, but even with the help of numerous artists, it would take over eleven years to complete due to its massive size. On 14 September 1989, in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the GDR and Müntzer's five-hundredth birthday, the *Frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland* [Early Bourgeois Revolution in Germany] was unveiled at Frankenhausen, just west of Halle.

This is all to say that Church-state relations, even on an official level, were considerably more complex than either Riley and Thomas's accounts attest. Furthermore, both are flawed in that they only analyze Church-state relations as they played out in major urban centers. This is a consistent problem throughout the literature: privileged positions are given to cities and their churches – especially East Berlin (and the Erlöserkirche Berlin-Lichtenberg, the Pfingstkirche, the Gethsemanekirche, and the Zionskirche), Halle (and the Christus-Kirche) and Leipzig (and the Nikolai Kirche) – while virtually nothing is said of churches in rural communities. This is likely a consequent of the fact that there is greater public demand for such histories in these cities, as well as a greater availability of written materials with which to construct them (in both state and personal archives). However, forming a more complete picture of the way in which the GDR Lutheran and Reformed Churches functioned under communism requires a look past the center, into the country's previously overlooked rural parishes. To give just one example of the degree to which the urban-rural dichotomy has been ignored, of the three interviews with Lutheran ministers found in Dirk Philipsen's *We Were the People*, it is significant to note that one is with a minister from a rural parish, Harald Wagner, yet Philipsen is chiefly interested in Wagner's involvement in the formation of the opposition group, Demokratie Jetzt, and only cursorily mentions that Wagner is from “a small town near Leipzig.”³⁹

of the GDR, 1976-1990, eds. Robert Atkins and Martin Kane, (Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1997), p. 336-7.

39 Philipsen, *We Were the People*, p. 36. Pastor Harald Wagner serves at the Michaelskirche in Heiningen.

The oral history projects conducted in the years following the “Peaceful Revolution” of 1989 evidence a number of methodological problems that pervade nearly all academic work on the GDR Protestant Church. I consider these and the solutions that social historians have offered to them in my first chapter, “A ‘Protestant Revolution?’: Church History as Protest Narrative.” The official Church organizations and ministries designed to serve the needs of rural communities are discussed in the second, “The Church and Collectivization: Special Ministries in Rural Parishes.” And in my third and final substantive chapter, “Parishes and Protest Groups: the Church in Upper Lusatia,” I take a look at the ways that individual parishes facilitated and sponsored their own local activities and outreach, sometimes against the efforts of regional church offices.

When examined in both ways, it becomes increasingly clear why the debate on the Church under state socialism persist without satisfying resolution: the conflicting sides operate within a collaboration-opposition binary that in reality, did not exist. As I have begun to explain in this chapter, there are clear narratives that can be assigned to each side: 1.) the hierarchy of the Church was infiltrated top-down by the Stasi, rendering it little more than an institution of state control in an atomized society; or 2.) the Church, as both an institution and through the work of individual pastors, provided opportunities to organize opposition to the state and in this way, fostered a nascent public sphere and civil society. To proceed with a historical analysis of the Church that operates outside the opposition-collaboration binary requires an understanding of the heuristic constraints built into both of these narratives.

CHAPTER I.

A “PROTESTANT REVOLUTION?”: CHURCH HISTORY AS PROTEST NARRATIVE

Christian Joppke: *Was the break [Umbruch] a “Protestant Revolution?”*
[The following answers were given in two separate interviews.]

Secretary of Church Youth Ministry of the BEK, Rudi Pahnke: That description is not wrong. It is of course a bit exaggerated. I would *not* describe it that way, no. The very word “revolution” is presumptuous. The major revolution was economic, thus the introduction of the [West German] Mark after the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁴⁰
—Berlin, 24 June 1991

Pastor Hans Simon, Zionskirche (Berlin): No, not at all. That strikes me as an arrogant assertion, in which the Church presents itself in a way that is simply not befitting of it...The Church was prepared to put what it could at the disposal [of protest groups]—spaces, churches, etc. But it is a complete distortion of the incidents to speak of a “Protestant Revolution.”⁴¹
—Berlin, 25 June 1991

Many of the most dramatic scenes of East Germany's “Revolutionary Autumn” took place within the walls or in the courtyards of the numerous Protestant churches in East Berlin, Erfurt, and Leipzig. Consider just one day: Monday, 23 October 1989, little over two weeks before the collapse of the Berlin Wall. In the morning, the Neues Forum (New Forum⁴²) used Erfurt's Predigerkirche to host its first open meeting, attended by several thousand. That same day, beginning at the Gethsemenekirche in Berlin, demonstrators marched to the Staatsrat der DDR (State Council of the GDR), demanding open elections. In the evening, at

40 “Die Beschreibung ist nicht verkehrt. Es ist natürlich ein bisschen übertrieben. Ich würde das so *nicht* beschreiben, nein. Schon das Wort ‘Revolution’ ist vermessen. Die wesentliche Revolution ist wirtschaftlich gewesen, also die Einführung der D-Mark nach dem Fall der Mauer.” Rudi Pahnke, interview by Christian Joppke, personal interview, Berlin, 24 June 1991, Joppke Box 1, transcript, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

41 “Nein, überhaupt nicht. Das halte ich für eine arrogante Behauptung, in der sich die Kirche darstellt in einer Weise, die ihr einfach nicht zukommt...die Kirche hat sich mit bereit gehalten, die hat sich mit zur Verfügung gestellt mit dem, was sie konnte, Räumen, Kirchen, usw. Aber von einer ‘protestantischen Revolution’ zu reden ist eine völlige Entstellung der Vorgänge.” Hans Simon, interview by Christian Joppke, personal interview, Berlin, 25 June 1991, Joppke Box 1, transcript, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

42 A political movement founded just one month prior, the *Neues Forum* demanded democratic reforms and freedom of the press and was, at this point, illegal in the eyes of the SED. See: Irena Kukutz, *Chronik der Bürgerbewegung Neues Forum 1989-1990*, (Berlin: BasisDruck, 2009).

the Nikolai Kirche in Leipzig, thousands gathered at peace prayers organized by Pastor Christian Führer. After the service, the attendees joined in a protest outside the church, calling for the immediate resignation of Egon Krenz, the successor to Erich Honecker and final chairman of the SED.⁴³

The importance of the Church – as both a physical structure and as a state-wide institution – in the events leading up to the collapse of East Germany and its subsequent reunification with the West should not be understated. Nor should it be exaggerated, as it perhaps has been in literature published in the early 1990s. While there are examples to the contrary, the dominant narrative among those historians writing before the opening of the BStU in 1992 (which proved the extent of Stasi infiltration in Church ranks, thus requiring a reevaluation of it⁴⁴) argued that the institutional support provided by the Protestant Church was the necessary catalyst for the events of 1989—in sum, a “Protestant Revolution.”⁴⁵ But looking at the way that this thesis is constructed and argued reveals what, at base, renders it intellectually suspect. To illustrate this point, I analyze the GDR oral history project of Christian Joppke; although my own research is only partly constructed around this methodology, Joppke's interviews nevertheless provide a particularly illustrative example of

43 Tyndale, *Protestants in Communist East Germany*, p. 117. The peace prayers held at Leipzig's Nikolai Kirche began in 1982, and were held weekly on Monday evenings. In connection with the prayer service on 9 October 1989, some 70,000 joined in protest against the SED. For an interview with Führer, see: Julia Elvers-Guyot, “Peace prayers helped bring down the Wall, says Leipzig pastor,” *Deutsche Welle*, 7 Jan. 2009, accessed 17 May 2012, <<<http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,3805080,00.html>>>.

44 For example, see: Gerhard Besier and Stephan Wolf, *Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken: Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR und die Kirchen*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1992).

45 Such a narrative is particularly apparent in the works of Ehrhart Neubert. See: Ehrhart Neubert, *Eine Protestantische Revolution* (Osnaburg: Kontext, 1990) and Ehrhart Neubert, “Staat, Kirche, Gesellschaft und 'Gruppen': Die Kirche und ihre Gruppen,” in *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949-1989*, (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997). Neubert's position may be explained by the fact that he is, in addition to being a historian, a former-East German and a Protestant theologian who was closely allied with pacifist movements in the late 1970s and 1980s. Neubert has addressed the issue of Stasi infiltration of Church ranks; cf., for example, his work on the Manfred Stolpe case: *Abschlussbericht des Stolpe-Untersuchungs-Ausschusses des Landtages Brandenburg*, ed. Ehrhart Neubert, (Cologne: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 1994). Additionally, the work of Gerhardt Rein emphasizes the importance of the Church in the final years leading up to the Wiedervereinigung. See: *Die Protestantische Revolution, 1987-1990: Ein deutsches Lesebuch*, ed. Gerhardt Rein, (Berlin: Wichern, 1990).

how nearly all historians have imposed preconstructed narratives on protest upon their histories of the Church (in this case, even as the evidence his interviewees provide calls this protest narrative into question). This is not just true of those who argue, as Joppke does, that the “Peaceful Revolution” was a “Protestant Revolution,” but also those who counter this thesis, for instance, by positing that the Church functioned in a collaborationist capacity. With these theses thus problematized, the dominant collaboration-opposition binary in which both operate is called into question.

I.1. PROVING A THESIS THROUGH ORAL HISTORY?

In the months following 9 November 1989, A. James McAdams of the Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame organized a large-scale GDR Oral History Project, with an expressed goal of “record[ing] on tape some of the still vivid memories of the former leaders of East Germany, so that...future students of German history would have a unique source for assessing the driving motivation of the individuals who once made up the country's dominant political culture.”⁴⁶ Eighty interviews – undertaken by eleven oral historians – were conducted as part of this project and of these, six were with members of the Church. Additionally, a concurrent and related project was conducted by Christian Joppke (quoted above) with GDR Church members, and these interviews are currently housed with those of the GDR Oral History Project in the Archives of the Hoover Institution Archives on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University.⁴⁷

46 A. James McAdams, “Preliminary Inventory to the GDR Oral History Project Interviews, 1990-1994,” Hoover Institution Archives, accessed 9 Apr. 2012, <<<http://cdn.calisphere.org/data/13030/1r/tf0j49n41r/-files/tf0j49n41r.pdf>>>, p. 3.

47 As referenced earlier, a third significant oral history project was conducted with (former-)GDR Church members by Dirk Philipsen in 1990-1. Philipsen's July 1990 interview with the Pastor of the Samariter Church in Berlin, Rainer Eppelmann (who was at this time serving as the Minister of Disarmament and Defense in the final cabinet of the GDR) in particular highlights many of the same methodological problems that will be discussed regarding Joppke. In his effort to bring back the “ideas and actions that originally informed” the fall of the GDR in 1989, Philipsen consistently imposes his own interpretation of events upon the narratives of his interviewees. In doing so, it at times seems as though there are two narrators, rather than one—Eppelmann, the subject of the interview. Looking at the way that Philipsen

A comparison of Joppke's four interviews reveals a clear hypothesis: the “Peaceful Revolution” was actually a “Protestant Revolution.” He engages his interviewees on this topic directly, asking, “Was the break [Umbruch] a 'Protestant Revolution?,'” but also poses a series of related inquiries that explore the relationship between the Protestant Church and protest in more structural terms, for example: “When did the Church become a roof for secular opposition?” or “Which parishes in Berlin were the centers of opposition?”⁴⁸ Through such questions, Joppke communicates an obvious text to his interviewees with which they are forced to engage: 1.) there was a discreet time at which the Church began functioning in an oppositional capacity; 2.) the role of individual churches can be expressed in physical terms as a “roof,” thus overlooking the more abstract ways that the Church may have facilitated protest (e.g., through rhetoric, theological justifications for pacifism, etc.); 3.) as it was only a “roof” for opposition, the Church is forced into a passive role in the opposition movement; 4.) there was a difference between religious opposition and secular opposition that occurred within the walls of the Church; and 5.) Berlin's churches are singled out as “the centers of opposition,” relegating those of other cities and smaller communities to a secondary position. These interviews suffer from an underlying methodological problem, namely, that Joppke presumes that the Church provided the structural foundation upon which a network of protest and opposition groups could be built, rather than allowing his interviewees to interpret their histories in such a way.⁴⁹

formulates his questions gives a particularly instructive example of the degree to which an interviewer is positioned with sufficient power so as to insist upon the importance of specific events in an individual's life story. For example, Philipsen asks Eppelmann to “Tell me what your response was to the Prague Spring in particular and to the political developments—as you perceived them—in Czechoslovakia in general.” Rather than allowing this topic to come up organically, asking the question in this way prompts Eppelmann to shape his life story around the Prague Spring, regardless of whether this event actually had a formative role in his life. Philipsen, *We Were the People*, pp. 1, 55-67.

48 “Wann wurde die Kirche ein Dach für weltliche Opposition?,” “Welche Gemeinden in Berlin wurden Zentrum der Opposition?” Hans Simon, interview by Christian Joppke, personal interview, Berlin, 25 June 1991.

49 Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully evaluate Joppke's practices as an oral historian (or

I.2. A HISTORY OF PROTEST IN THE CHURCH, OR THE CHURCH IN PROTEST?

As already noted, the thesis that East Germany's "Peaceful Revolution" was in reality a "Protestant Revolution" is not unique to Joppke's research. Yet, the way Joppke imposes it upon the narratives of his interviewees (a thesis that both Rudi Pahnke and Hans Simon more or less reject) communicates what, fundamentally, renders it conceptually problematic.⁵⁰ Rather than constructing a history of the Church as a means to better understand how dissent- and protest-oriented activity constituted one important expression of East German Protestant religious life, historians such as Joppke conduct their research from an inverted perspective, one that delegates the Church a defined role in what is best described as a protest history of the GDR.⁵¹ In this present research, Joppke asks his interviewees to explain how, why, and where the Church intersected or became affiliated with large-scale public protest, and in doing so, gains little knowledge of the Church's day-to-day operations and how these may (or may not have) constituted a form of dissent or

even to situate his methodology within the context of present best-practices), it is worthwhile to note that the very kind of questions he asks clearly prioritizes information and fact over the interviewee's "life story." In doing so, Joppke deprives himself of part of the unique richness of oral history: even as he gathers present-day narrative constructions, he gains no insight in to the process by which these constructions are generated. Rather than allowing the topic of the connection between Church and protest groups to rise organically (perhaps in context to a certain experience or event, thus revealing further information about the interviewee's relationship to both), Joppke asks the question outright, and the answers he receives provide little more than a superficial analysis.

50 Despite the responses his interviewees provide, Joppke nevertheless continues to access parts of this narrative in his writings on protest in 1980s East Germany, particular the notion of the Church as a "roof of secular protest." For example, in his 1995 article "Intellectuals, Nationalism and the Exit from Communism: The Case of East Germany," he comments that "[The peace and human rights movement], which emerged *under the roof of the Protestant church* [emphasis added] in the early 1980s, was carried by a younger generation of peculiarly nameless intellectuals who had been socialized in the postwar period and whose key experiences had been the Western student upheaval and the Prague spring of 1968." Joppke's main argument here is that the GDR lacked a national oppositional voice (including among peace and human rights activists), so it is somewhat surprising that this phrase appears at all. Christian Joppke, "Intellectuals, Nationalism and the Exit from Communism: The Case of East Germany," *Society for Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 37, no. 2, Apr. 1995, p. 227.

51 For example, returning to the literature reviewed in the introduction to this work, Riley's *Everyday Subversion* explicitly states in the introduction to its chapter on the Church that it is "...neither a history of the Church nor an account of Church-SED relations. Rather, the purpose here is to trace the development of resistance in and around the Church and to identify the unique rhetorical features of this resistance," serving to "show how social movement[s] matured..." Riley, *Everyday Subversion*, p. 96. Despite the way she frames her own argument, Riley's work is perhaps – at least of the literature reviewed here – the only one which does not work from this inverted perspective, especially in its discussion on Church rhetoric.

protest. Knowing that he conducted his research in the early years after the Wiedervereinigung, at a time when public figures and academics alike were engaged in the task of explaining the sudden collapse of the GDR, helps clarify why he approached his topic in this manner. That is to say, by employing this thesis, Joppke sought to answer the primary research question of the day, but in doing so, prevented himself from obtaining a richer and more complete picture of the Church under state socialism, one that may have revealed a more complicated role than that of “roof for secular opposition.” Thus, regardless of its validity, the heuristic value of this thesis must be challenged as it is an impediment to proving its own claims.

This inverted approach – that is to say, one that prioritizes its analysis of GDR protest over that of the Church, despite ostensibly focusing on latter – is also common among those historians who reject the “Protestant Revolution” thesis. As such, they are equally vulnerable to critique. To give but one example, Peter Voss, in his examination of the sociological and cultural precedents for what he terms the “spontaneous revolution” in East Germany, asserts that “the fall of socialism in the GDR was as little a Protestant revolution as the change in power in Poland was Catholic.”⁵² To support this claim, Voss points to a 1989 interview with Leipzig pastors on the topic of their relations with (apparently secular) alternative groups. Half of those interviewed expressed support for the presence of these groups within the Church, with the caveat that their work have some kind of “Christian motive.” Instead of using this as evidence that the Church was open to protest groups, Voss chooses to highlight the opposite, that an equal number opposed. From this, he concludes that although the Church, in accordance with its Christian ideology, “work[ed] against injustice and oppression,” it “did not fight offensively against the political causes of

⁵² Peter Voss, “The Role of the Church,” in *Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution: East Germany, 1989*, eds. Karl-Dieter Opp, Peter Voss and Christiane Gern, (Ann Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 120.

injustice.”⁵³ In any case, Voss's questionable analysis of an inconclusive set of interviews is arguably a minor misstep compared to the larger conceptual problem inherent to the way he frames his argument: prioritizing his study of Church relationships with (secular, political, alternative) groups to an investigation of the Church policy and practice per se.

I.3. PROTEST AND DISSENT AS INTERPRETIVE CATEGORIES

Perhaps more of an issue is the fact that, on the whole, research on the Protestant Church in the GDR focuses primarily on those activities that fall under an extremely narrow definition of *protest* and *dissent*.⁵⁴ The complexity of these terms, but especially the latter, is explored by Philip Boobbyer in his “Truth-telling, Conscience and Dissent in Late Soviet Russia: Evidence from Oral Histories.” Although speaking on the Soviet case, his analysis is here very instructive. Boobbyer's stated project is to “cast light on the moral discourse [of Soviet dissidents who came to prominence during the Brezhnev era]”⁵⁵ by inviting interviewees to tell their moral autobiographies⁵⁶, in particular, regarding their interactions with the state. Dissent as both a concept and a practice plays an important role in all of the 41 autobiographies that Boobbyer collects, although the manifestations of it can be roughly divided into two different types: 1.) challenges to the political order from a more confrontational space without; and 2.) from a more discreet position within. The divisions

53 Ibid., p. 122. Just as Voss rejects the “Protestant Revolution thesis,” he appropriates its language (“The metaphor *catalyst*, which refers to a material that accelerates a chemical reaction without losing its original state, is a good description of the church's role in the GDR revolution.” This is in many ways similar to the way that John Torpey describes the Church, arguing that it was at once an important “free space” for dissidents to meet, but its own bargains with the state prevented it from advancing any other protest agenda than antiwar activism. John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and its Legacy*, (Minneapolis, Mn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 80.

54 Voss employs a particularly narrow definition of “protest,” or to be more precise, uses the policies of the Church to define “protest” negatively: “The church as an institution was not interested in publicly supporting or promoting protests against the state. The church itself did not organize any protest activities. It also did not directly encourage protest, such as by appealing to the duty of each citizen to take action. Thus, the church was no political entrepreneur. Political changes were not and continue not to be the goal of church policies.” Peter Voss, “The Role of the Church,” p. 122.

55 Philip Boobbyer, “Truth-telling, Conscience and Dissent in Late Soviet Russia: Evidence from Oral Histories,” *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 30, 2000, p. 555.

56 Boobbyer defines a moral autobiography as a “story of truth-telling,” and in this case, is given in response to a question like, “How did your moral values form and develop in Soviet society?” *Ibid.*, p. 579.

between these forms of dissent (which he, borrowing the language of political scientist Aleksandras Shtromas, labels “extrastructural” and “intrastructural,” respectively) are rarely as clear as one might expect. As Boobbyer explains, the more obvious extrastructural dissent often represents “the tip of an iceberg,” as “ideas flowed easily from one group to another.”⁵⁷ In sum, these autobiographies reveal the “inner worlds of moral dilemmas and strategies” employed by a wide range of dissenting Soviet intellectuals, helping to explain the fluidity of behavior considered moral. Depending upon an individual's changing moral contract with the state, “even the smallest things could be considered acts of dissent if the circumstances were comprehended. Any act of compliance or dissent must thus be interpreted in terms of where the previous boundaries of the permissible lay.”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, such a nuanced understanding of the various manifestations of dissent in GDR Church activity is, on the whole, lacking.

One work that has successfully complicated the working definition of dissent in East German historical writing is Sabrina Ramet's *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: the Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, although its focus is not entirely on the Church. Here, Ramet suggests that an analysis of activity generally grouped together as dissent reveals two different modalities of expression: disaffection, or “discontent with the system itself without necessarily entailing a belief in one's ability to change the system, but possibly being expressed in social nonconformism or deviance,” and dissent, which is “discontent with the system, charged by belief in one's ability to effect change, however gradual or slight, and implying an external standard by which the system's performance is evaluated.”⁵⁹ As shall be seen, activities of the Church, although working to effect change

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 579.

⁵⁹ Sabrina Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: the Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, second edition, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 56.

that may have been “gradual or slight,” can nonetheless be considered dissent by this definition.

I.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

By complicating the rigid understanding of protest and dissent common to the historians and historical works evaluated in both this and the preceding chapters, it the objective of this thesis to construct a history of the East German Protestant Church which moves beyond the now dominant opposition-collaboration binary. Fundamental to this project is the work of social historians, such Alexei Yurchak. In his *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, Yurchak, although writing on the Soviet Union, very clearly lays out the problems inherent in those histories that are framed by a binary account:

What tends to get lost in binary accounts is the crucial and seemingly paradoxical fact that, for great numbers of Soviet citizens, many of the fundamental values, ideals, and realities of socialist life (such as equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations, safety, education work, creativity, and concern for the future) were of genuine importance, despite the fact that many of their everyday practices routinely transgressed, reinterpreted, or refused certain norms and rules represented in the official ideology of the socialist state. For many, “socialism” as a system of human values and as an everyday reality of “normal life”...was not necessarily equivalent to “the state” or “ideology:” indeed living socialism to them often meant something quite different from the official interpretations provided by state rhetoric.⁶⁰

As I will argue, this seeming paradox between fundamental values and everyday behavior was one that was internalized by GDR Church members, and for this reason, the working definitions of protest and dissent must be complicated sufficiently so as to fully explore ways that the Church was involved not only in extrastructural dissent, but intrastructural as well (which, if one were to employ the opposition-collaboration binary, may not appear to be dissent at all).

⁶⁰ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until it was No More: the Last Soviet Generation*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 8. I would like to thank Anna Whittington for directing my attention to this work.

In doing so, I continue with a project begun by Anna Whittington, who in her “Living in Shades of Gray: Church, State, and Society in the GDR, 1978-1989,” argues that opposition and collaboration exist as poles on a spectrum, and while one can find examples of both of these extremes, “most churches – and indeed, most citizens – lived in the gray area between...”⁶¹ By reevaluating the oral history projects (such as Joppke's) conducted during and after the Wiedervereinigung, Whittington posits this was primarily because members of the Church “emphasized their desire, whether by choice or pragmatism, to work in the East German system. Many believed in some of the principles of the state, and hoped to transform their society into an improved socialist state, driving both criticism and cooperation with the state.”⁶²

In my own work, I in part examine and evaluate interviews (with consideration of the particular methodological concerns related to the methodology of oral history), but as stated earlier, this is not my primary focus. Rather, working with Mary Fulbrook's assertion that “particularly in rural areas [as early as the 1950s, and under the auspices of religious life], there was a very real form of what may be described as 'civil society,’”⁶³ I construct my analysis around expressions of this religious life within the rural parishes of East Germany's Protestant Churches. If such areas indeed fostered a 'civil society,' it likely that rural Church activity operated in a much more complex way than the opposition-collaboration binary could adequately describe (a binary – it should be added – that was developed and is yet still accessed to examine Church activity in urban areas). With the exception of the publications of the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf (Environmental Library of Großhennersdorf), and one of its most recent presentations, “Trying to live in truth: opposition life in Upper

61 Whittington, “Living in Shades of Gray: Church, State, and Society in the GDR, 1978-1989,” p. 2.

62 *Ibid.*

63 Fulbrook, “The Limits of Totalitarianism,” p. 39.

Lusatia between 1978 and 1989,”⁶⁴ this an almost entirely unexplored topic. But in an area of study that has in some ways become ossified by binaries and definitions, a lack academic literature is not necessarily an impediment to study, and may rather be seen as an advantage. In any case, it provides a new look at a “contemporary history [that] is perhaps more peculiarly politicised than most eras of history...”⁶⁵

This thesis is constructed from a diverse and largely unexamined body of archival materials, interview transcripts, and personal records held in various collections in Germany, Hungary, and the United States. EKD and BEK records housed at the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin (Evangelical Central Archive, or EZA) provide not only an explanation of the day-to-day workings of those official Church organizations charged with addressing the needs of rural communities, they also communicate how these groups adapted to better suit those needs. To this, I bring an analysis of the anthologies published by the archives of the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf, particularly its catalogue of interview transcripts with Church ministers working in rural Upper Lusatia. These provide a view of individual church-directed activity on a local level. (There remains the question of how representative these parishes are for all of East Germany, and I will later argue, they are at once a good indication of an overall trend, and unique in their context and content.) The Open Society Archives (OSA) in Budapest, with its extensive collection of reports written by researchers for Radio Free Europe, were vital in helping me trace the complexity of both Protestant and Catholic Church-state relations, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. All of these materials are presented thematically: I begin with a description and analysis of Church organizations responsible for ministering to rural parishes – particularly during the two

64 “Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu Leben': Widerständiges Leben in der Oberlausitz 1978-1989.” For the presentation website, see: “Wanderausstellung 'Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben,’” Umweltbibliothek Grosshennersdorf, accessed 15 May 2012, <<<http://www.umweltbibliothek.org/cgi-bin/page.pl?idx=22&detail=&l=0>>>.

65 Fulbrook, “The Limits of Totalitarianism,” p. 27.

phases of collectivization initiated by the SED in the 1950s – together constituting a form of intrastructural dissent against a process seen by the Church as damaging to the social fabric of these communities. In a second study, I direct greater focus on a variety of rural parishes in Upper Lusatia and their interactions with and outreach to community groups that in some ways represented a more extrastructural form of dissent.

As approximately 15 of the 17 million people living in the Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Zone of Occupation, or SBZ) belonged to Protestant Church (in 1945), I have intentionally limited myself to this group.⁶⁶ However, Catholics represented a significant percentage of SBZ residents (little over one million, or 5.9%, in 1945), and with the influx of refugees from the German regions in the east and the Sudetenland, their numbers would increase throughout the decade (nearly 2.8 million, or 13.9% of the total population of approximately 19 million, in 1949).⁶⁷ Literature on the Catholic Church in the GDR has, like that of the Protestant Church, focused primarily upon its interactions (or perhaps more accurately, lack of interaction) with protest groups in urban areas and with the state on a structural level.⁶⁸ There thus remains the possibility for a parallel project on the Catholic Church in rural parishes of the GDR, and also a comparison between it and Protestantism, although such an investigation cannot be conducted here. In either case, if one is to gain any perspective on the Church's relationship with the state (whether Catholic or Protestant, but for the sake of the argument here, I will restrict myself to the latter), it stands to reason that one must first analyze the way that it as an institution understood its mission in society. This is, in turn, best observed through its actions toward those

66 Thomas, "The evangelical church in the German Democratic Republic," p. 212.

67 Bernd Schäfer, *The East German State and the Catholic Church, 1945-1989*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 16-17.

68 In addition to the work of Schäfer (*ibid.*), see: Robert F. Goeckel, "The Catholic Church in the East Germany," in *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, ed. Pedro Ramet, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990) and Josef Pivousek, "Die katholische Kirche in der DDR," in *Die Rolle der Kirchen in der DDR: eine Erste Bilanz*, ed. Hörst Dähn, (Munich: Olzog, 1993).

communities it believed to be most in need; in the case of East Germany, especially during the late 1940s through the 1960s, there stands a good argument that it was the population living with the country's agricultural territory, facing the dual hardships of a depressed postwar economy and the socially disorienting politics of collectivization.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH AND COLLECTIVIZATION: SPECIAL MINISTRIES IN RURAL PARISHES

The situation of collectivization in the countryside requires special in-depth measures and authoritative pastoral care. Here, all ministries of the Church should have a basic pastoral component... Besides industrial laborers, the intelligentsia, and the middle class, the Church will be separated from the people of the villages as well.⁶⁹

- Oberkirchenrat Hans Jorgen Behm, Dienst der Kirche auf dem Land (Senior Church Councilor to the Office of the Church in the Country), 19 February 1964

For those rural communities within the SBZ – and after 1949, the GDR – the first fifteen years following the Second World War were a period of near constant social upheaval. With the conclusion of the war came political collapse, foreign occupation, and economic turmoil. In September 1945, the chairman of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany, or KPD⁷⁰) Wilhelm Pieck advocated a policy of Bodenreform (Land Reform), articulated in his famous slogan: “The Junker's land in the farmer's hands.”⁷¹ KPD, working in conjunction with the agricultural departments of the Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (Soviet Military Administration in Germany, or SMAD) confiscated a total of 8,000 estates from East Elbian Junker landlords, targeting those whose holdings were above 100 hectares. As this policy was first implemented in the

69 “Die Kollektivsituation auf dem Lande erfordert in besonderen Maße eine vertiefte und vollmächtige Seelsorge. Hier sollte aller Dienst der Kirche einen seelsorglichen Grundzug haben... Die Kirche wird sonst nach dem Kontaktverlust zum Industriearbeiter, zur Intelligenz, zum Bürgertum auch noch den Menschen des Dorfes verlieren.” Hans Jorgen Behm, *Aufgaben der Ehe- und Familienseelsorge im kollektivierten Dorf*, 19 Feb. 1964, KadL, B.104/143, EZA.

70 By 10 June 1945, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany issued a decree allowing for the organization of political parties in the SBZ, so long as they were antifascist in orientation. On 11 June, KPD submitted its charter (and was strongly associated with the Soviets), followed a few days later by the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany, or SPD), which “was reborn with a more radical programme.” Despite considerable complications, the two merged (with substantial influence of the Soviet Military Administration) as the SED in April 1946, splitting the SPD from its associations with the party in the west. For a more extensive discussion of early SBZ party politics, see: Mark Allinson, *Politics and popular opinion in East Germany 1945-68*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 14.

71 “Junkerland in Bauernhand.” Sean Brennan, *The Politics of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Germany: The Case of Berlin-Brandenburg 1945-1949*, (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 25

former Prussian province of Saxony, it may appear to be a local decision, but as Jonathan Osmond notes, it was “actually conceived in Moscow and followed by almost identical measures in the other *Länder* and *Provinzen*.”⁷²

By 1948, the attentions of the SED had shifted to larger peasant farms, and an additional 4,000 properties were seized on the grounds that their owners were guilty of war crimes or had supported the National Socialists. The *Tägliche Rundschau* [Daily Review] and the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* [German People's Newspaper], the official organs of SMAD and KPD respectively, lauded the Bodenreform as one that would liberate the German people from the “arch-reactionary Junkers,” whose authority they conflated with Prussian military aggression and the Third Reich.⁷³ Thus, this territory, that for centuries had been dominated by a small group of powerful, chiefly aristocratic landlords and populated by a small peasant class and a much larger majority of poor agricultural laborers, was “suddenly deprived of or – alternately – liberated from its traditional ruling class” as nearly one-third of all its land was redistributed.⁷⁴ The Bodenreform brought about an undeniable break with the previous social order; however, in its wake, and with the increased number of refugees entering the country from the Sudetenland and other regions in the east, these old class distinctions gave way to new and arguably just as divisive categories and cultural labels. The most important of these was between the so-called Altbauern (old peasants) – those who, before the war, occupied the regions of Germany now within the SBZ, regardless of whether or not they had been given land under the Bodenreform – and the Neubauern (new peasants) – those who came from the eastern territories and were thus without property (although a great number of these had not owned land even in the communities from where they originated). In many

72 Jonathan Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm: East German agrarian society 1945-61,” in *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, p. 134.

73 Brennan, *The Politics of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Germany*, p. 24.

74 Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 130.

cases, Altbauern with large farms, but not so large that they came under the reforms, were often positioned sufficiently better economically and socially so that they could use the redistribution to their advantage.

It is, of course, somewhat reductive to speak of rural communities in the SBZ as a singularity. Even into the late 1950s, there existed considerable regional variation in dominant agricultural forms; as Osmond explains, these ranged from the “middling peasantry of Saxony and Thuringia, through the tenant farmers of Saxony-Anhalt, to the large estates of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg.”⁷⁵ As such, not all places reacted to the Bodenreform in the same way, nor would they to later attempts at collectivization. Through collectivization, implemented by the SED in two phases during 1952-3 and again in 1959-60, the differences in composition and economic character of GDR rural communities would become increasingly less significant, but there nevertheless remained a “sensitivity to earlier social gradation [that] for decades permeated the ostensibly uniform collectivist system, and is present even today.”⁷⁶

The reaction of Protestant Church members to the Bodenreform was limited. As noted before, Church properties were, by and large, untouched by the agricultural departments of SMAD,⁷⁷ so opposition came mostly from figures such as Dibelius, who believed that the policy was initiated for political reasons rather than to help facilitate the recovery of Germany's agricultural sector. Critics in the Church also alleged that its implementation was unduly politicized, particularly in the way that some non-Nazis were targeted on the grounds of alleged past associations with the Third Reich. But there was

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ There are examples to the contrary, one of the most dramatic being when the GDR knocked down the “ancient and beautiful” Universitätskirche St. Pauli (University Church of St. Paul) in Leipzig, on 30 May 1968, “allegedly because it was taking up valuable space in the city center.” Tyndale, *Protestants in Communist East Germany*, p. 19.

certainly no consensus of opinion in the Church. In contrast to Dibelius, some came out vocally in support of the Bodenreform: Bishop Moritz Mitzenheim of Thuringia and Wilhelm Beste of Mecklenburg argued that the new land policy was “an essential economic measure to support the reconstruction of German democracy.”⁷⁸ For most, it was a relatively unimportant issue among a great number of more urgently pressing ones. In two meetings of the Protestant Church leadership on 25 September and 27 November 1945, the three topics that dominated discussion were “the need for creating a new organizational structure for the church, as well as dealing with the problems of the restoration of church buildings and [the] considerable refugee crisis...”⁷⁹ In the first years after the war, concerns over structural and administrative reform were of chief importance as the Church came to terms with its past associations with Nazism.

By contrast, Church reaction to collectivization, both on the level of individual ministers and institutionally, was considerably more complicated. It seems that few ministers objected – or at least voiced objections – to collectivization theoretically or conceptually, but there are examples: files maintained by the SED contain numerous reports (filed both by party observers and FDJ members) of politically “hostile” sermons, especially those made from the pulpits in Magdeburg. In one case, numerous ministers read from a pastoral letter “attacking the SED's collectivist agricultural policies. The letter made common cause with farmers by identifying both church and agriculture as institutions under threat.”⁸⁰ But considering the total number of sermons made in the GDR during the 1950s, this number is admitted quite small. What was of much greater importance, at least from the official perspective of the Church, was addressing the negative social effects related to the implementation of collectivization in the current East German context, for instance, in the

⁷⁸ Brennan, *The Politics of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Germany*, p. 25.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Allinson, *Politics and popular opinion in East Germany*, p. 89.

way that it incited disagreements in families on when (and if) to collectivize, or between community members whose allegiances were often divided along *Altbauern/Neubauern* lines. Although not an obvious or extrastructural protest, such action must certainly be considered dissent to some degree as it sought to affect social change from the intrastructural position of the Church.

Collectivization, SED officials reasoned, would initiate the process through which the peasants of the “*Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat*” (“Workers’ and Peasants’ State”) could cultivate the desired socialist personality and thus meet their industrial laborer comrades as equal carriers of the revolution—in the words of the SED, the “class struggle in the village.”⁸¹ But if the Bodenreform was more or less welcomed by GDR farmers (perhaps unsurprisingly, as the vast majority stood to gain from it), the reaction of these same farmers to collectivization could not have been more negative, ranging from active non-cooperation to acts of outright sabotage. At least in the years prior to the construction of the Berlin Wall, many suspected that the GDR would reunite with the rest of Germany, and thus reasoned that there was little to be gained by collectivization. Too, the structure of rural life in the GDR posed many obstacles to this objective. George Last provides a number of examples in his *After the 'socialist Spring': Collectivisation and Economic Transformation in the GDR*: “the central role of the church in village life, the complex networks of familial relations in the village, the lack of anonymity and the essential interdependency of inhabitants of small communities were important factors in preserving the established social order.”⁸² While there are of course examples to the contrary, those communities where the influence of the Church was particularly great often proved the most impenetrable to the efforts of the SED.

81 “Klassenkampf auf dem Dorfe 1947-1949,” Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, DY 301/IV-2/7, Bundesarchiv, Berlin, in Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 131.

82 George Last, *After the 'Socialist Spring': Collectivisation and Economic Transformation in the GDR*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 13.

This was certainly true where the Reformed Church predominated, and there are many anecdotes of individual pastors who urged their parishioners to resist collectivization. What is surprising is that SED members charged with implementing this policy were in some cases – at least in the 1950s – still “practicing Christians,” and did very little to challenge these Church members.⁸³

On an organizational level, EKD, and later, BEK sponsored a number of organizations whose primary objective was to help deal with the social changes brought on by collectivization (which will be explored more extensively below). Administering effective pastoral care, the Church reasoned, necessarily meant dealing with these changes on both a secular and spiritual level. While not as clear an expression of extrastructural dissent as that perhaps articulated by individual ministers against SED policy, these organizations nevertheless functioned in an important intrastructural capacity, seeking to improve conditions in rural areas through community involvement. The theological basis for this kind of activity had already been articulated by the Church just a few decades prior, justifying the work of the Dorfkirchenbewegung (Village Church Movement). In some ways, the concerns of rural churches had not changed in over one hundred years—in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the following, they wrestled with the dual problems of rapid urbanization (with a concomitant depopulation of the countryside) and an accompanying decline in the status of agriculture relative to industry. In the 1950s, the concern was less with urbanization, but mass exodus from East to West Germany. Regardless, the Dorfkirchenbewegung and East German Church organizations shared more than a common concern with life in the countryside, but rather an entire set of guiding theological principles. In order to explain this connection, this chapter first explores the

83 *Ibid.*

Dorfkirchenbewegung through its prewar history, analyzes the legacy of this movement in the form of EKD and BEK rural Church organizations, and finally, posits how this activity constituted a form of intrastructural dissent.

II.1. RURAL CHURCHES IN THE MIDST OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

“One stone after another breaks away from the old ruins of the village church,” writes Hans von Lüpke in the introduction to the first volume of the magazine *Die Dorfkirche* (*The Village Church*), published in October 1907.⁸⁴ The deterioration of the church to which von Lüpke, a Lutheran theologian from Thuringia, refers is at once physical and metaphoric: not only were many of Germany's ancient village churches falling into disrepair, their congregants, enticed by the economic opportunities to be found in the country's quickly industrializing cities, abandoned both village and church, amounting to what was considered no less than a “village crisis.”⁸⁵ It is impossible to speak of a single German Industrial Revolution; perhaps it is more accurate to speak of two, beginning with the growth of metallurgical and textile industries in the Rhineland and Saxony during the first half of the nineteenth century, followed by that of electrical and chemical engineering throughout Germany (but now including the center), during the second.⁸⁶ In any case, the demographic shifts related to these two periods of rapid industrialization had very concrete effects upon the landscape of the country. At the founding of the empire in 1871, only 36.1% of Germans lived in cities; within forty years, this had increased to 60%. More striking is the density of the concentration of the population within these cities: whereas, in 1871, there were only three cities with a population of 200,000 inhabitants or more, this had increased nearly

84 “Ein Stein nach dem anderen bricht aus dem alten Gemäuer der Dorfkirche heraus.” Eckhard Fenner, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 9, eds. Michael Wolter and Getrud Freitag-Otte, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1982), p. 147.

85 Christoph Burba, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Religion Past and Present*, Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski and Eberhard Jüngel (eds.), Brill Online, 2012.

86 Jochen Streb, Jörg Baten and Shuxi Yin, “Technological and Geographical Knowledge Spillover in the German Empire 1877-1918,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 59, no. 2, May 2006, p. 365.

eight-fold, to twenty-three, by 1910.⁸⁷

In the midst of this national transformation, Protestant (and in particular, Lutheran) Churches recognized the importance of the village church as a cultural and social space. Rural ministers as well as theologians, religious pedagogues, teachers, and Heimat writers – most notably, journalist and author Heinrich Sohnrey (whose works were among the favorites of National Socialist leaders, perhaps indicating the forthcoming crisis within the movement) – contributed to the pages of *Die Dorfkirche*, giving a more visible forum to their concerns. Beginning at the local level, in the years following the publication of *Die Dorfkirche*, a country-wide Dorfkirchenbewegung emerged in order to better address community needs; this was “not a movement of famers,” Christoph Burba observes, but rather “an intervention of village pastors and teachers on behalf of villages. They reacted to the village crisis, understood as a *state of illness*, with skepticism toward progress and a romantic preservation of the religious, moral, and social circumstances in the village, which they understood to be ‘healthy.’”⁸⁸ By bringing concerns and ideas of many rural ministers together, the Dorfkirchenbewegung – especially in the years prior to the First World War – inspired a “lively intellectual and spiritual awakening” among rural church members and helped support diverse activities within churches, reinvigorating religious life.⁸⁹

The movement placed particular emphasis upon the importance of Heimat (a German concept that lacks an equivalent in English, meaning “home” or “home country,” but in a much more complex way; for Ernst Bloch, it is an “an expression of unfulfilled hope: ‘that which radiates into everybody’s childhood and where no one has yet been...’”⁹⁰)

87 Cornelius Torp, “The Great Transformation: German Economy and Society, 1850-1914,” *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 351.

88 Burba, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Religion Past and Present*, Brill Online.

89 Fenner, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, p. 147.

90 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vols., (Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 1986) in Ingrid Schoberth,

and Volkstum (folk tradition). Pastors, such as von Lüpke, associated religious life in rural parishes with a unique expression of piety that at once engaged and intertwined belief with Heimat and Volkstum, and many of the articles written during the early run of *Die Dorfkirche* (1907-14) address this interconnectedness with studies into the sociology and psychology of religion. Religious historian Eckhard Fenner, however, notes that this position was not received uncritically. Some theologians questioned its romanticized depiction of rural life in particular, and observed that the overemphasis upon the uniqueness of rural piety resulted in an ideological narrowing of many members of the Kirchenbewegung regarding religious practice and custom.⁹¹

In the years following the First World War, *Die Dorfkirche* and the Kirchenbewegung adopted an extreme and undeniably nationalistic tone. Its fixation on Heimat and Volkstum – once part of the way that the movement celebrated rural religious life – was vulnerable to being subsumed in xenophobic rhetoric. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that this ideological shift was unique to either the magazine or the movement on the whole; during the 1920s, an uncritical nationalism spread throughout the German Protestant Church. But it can be said that many of the most enthusiastic members of the Deutsche Christen were also members of the Dorfkirchenbewegung. Always at its core was a nationalistic liberal theology, but in the interwar years, under the influence of theologians such as Emanuel Hirsch, Werner Elert, and Paul Althaus, this would transform into one that “deified the state by making it a holy order given by God...[and] discussed the strong ties between Christianity and the German *Volk* and thus made the renewal of the *Volk* appear to be a Christian cause.”⁹²

“Home,” *Religion Past and Present*, eds. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Jankowski and Eberhard Jüngel, Brill Online, 2012.

91 *Ibid*, p. 148. Fenner points to A. Eckert's 1908 work, “Dorfkirche,” in particular.

92 Kenneth C. Barnes, *Nazism, liberalism and Christianity: Protestant social thought in Germany and Great*

A serious challenge to this politicization was mounted by the Gustav Mahr, who, in his seminal essay, *Die Theologie des Wortes und die Dorfkirchenbewegung* [The Theology of the Word and the Village Church Movement] argued on a theological basis for the reorientation of the movement; in all, this would mark a move away from liberal, to dialectical theology. In 1934, the Bekenkende Kirche – with significant contribution by Swiss theologian Karl Barth (perhaps the most famous proponent of dialectical theology) – published the *Barmer Theologische Erklärung* [The Barmen Declaration], in which it articulated the theological basis for its repudiation of National Socialism and anti-semitism; this basis was dialectical theology, one that “under the conditions of modernity's manifest susceptibility to crisis, rejects a synthetic correlation of Christian religion with bourgeois culture and thereby simultaneously maintains its uniqueness, consisting in the act of faith itself, over against cultural products.”⁹³ (In the context of the Dorfkirchenbewegung, this meant that “the work of the church in building up the community must occur on the basis of the gospel.”⁹⁴) Mahr and his allies in the Dorfkirchenbewegung used the *Erklärung* extensively in their struggle against the influence of the Deutsche Christen in the movement, the results of which can be easily observed. The articles published in *Die Dorfkirche* after 1936 are markedly less political, and deal much more directly with the issues that were of interest to the magazine at its outset: the changes in the structure of the rural church, the loss of traditional societal bonds, the transformation of self-understanding of farmers and agricultural laborers, and continued urbanization. Cooperative activities between members of the Dorfkirchenbewegung grew more and more infrequent and difficult to arrange with

Britain, 1925-1937, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), pp. 105-6.

93 Dietrich Korsch, “Dialectical Theology,” *Religion Past and Present*, eds. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Jankowski and Eberhard Jüngel, Brill Online, 2012.

94 Burba, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Religion Past and Present*, Brill Online.

the outbreak of World War II and *Die Dorfkirche* ceased publication in 1941.⁹⁵

The movement's orientation toward dialectical theology would be a permanent one. In 1951, the Association of Village Church Work was founded by EKD (which at this time, included member churches from both Germanies). As Burba argues, dialectical theology “guarantee[d] a new beginning for its work and continuation after the war and the collapse of nationalist thought.”⁹⁶ There was certainly a need to build up the postwar rural community. Many of the issues that defined the Dorfkirchenbewegung in both its initial and final phases (e.g. churches in all states of disrepair, massive population shifts, rapid economic change) not only persisted in both East and West in the decades following World War II, they were in many ways exacerbated. Yet, these problems were likely felt more acutely by those living in the SBZ/GDR, as the structure of rural life was further disrupted by the eight-year-long process of collectivization, which changed even the most basic ways farmers interacted with the land. The Protestant Church in East Germany responded to the needs of these communities through ministries designed to provide specialized pastoral care.

II.2. GDR YOUTH MINISTRIES IN RURAL PARISHES

Under the auspices of the Kommission für Kirchliche Jugendarbeit (Commission for Church Youth Work, or KKJ) of the BEK, established in 1974,⁹⁷ the BEK sponsored five major youth organizations, within which numerous other smaller groups and chapters may be

95 Barnes, *Nazism, liberalism and Christianity*, pp. 105-6.

96 Burba, “Dorfkirchenbewegung,” *Religion Past and Present*, Brill Online.

97 The previous incarnation of the KKJ was the Ausschuss Kirchliche Jugendarbeit (Commission on Church Youth Work), founded in 1970 as part of the organization of the BEK in the previous year. This group was renamed and reorganized by recommendation of the Synod on 1 October 1974. Based upon the guidelines set down for the support staff of the new KKJ, it appears that the aim of this restructuring was to help foster better integration of the various preexisting youth organizations. [“Coordination of the entire church youth ministry within the Bund and its member churches.” (“Koordinierung der gesamten kirchlichen Jugendarbeit im Bereich des Bundes und seiner Gliedkirchen.”)] BEK, “Beschluß der Synode des Bundes der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR zu Kommissionen und Ausschüssen des Bundes der Evangelischen Kirchen,” 1 Oct. 1974, Mitteilungsblatt des BEK, B.5-6/1974, EZA. This thesis cannot provide a full consideration of those groups that operated independently of the BEK, but as they did maintain close contact with it, it is worthwhile mentioning two of the most important by name: the Jungmännerwerke (Young Men's Work) and the Jugend des Gemeinschaftsverbandes (Youth of the Community Association).

counted.⁹⁸ These organizations pre-dated the BEK itself, and most traced their origins to the 1950s. While they often had a stated religious pedagogical mission, in reality much of the educational materials and recreational activities provided were not always entirely (or at times, even explicitly) religious. Nor were all attendees from religious families; the Church had an open policy regarding its youth programs, but perhaps this point should not be overstated. A demographic study conducted by one group indicates that the majority of youth who attended such programs claimed affiliation with the sponsoring church through their parents or grandparents (56%)⁹⁹ while a 1980 study conducted by Radio Free Europe asserted that the number of non-Christian youth attending Church programs throughout East Germany often reached as high as 50%.¹⁰⁰ A list of these organizations suggests the range of youth issues that the KKJ sought address.

1.) The most internationally important of these is the Ökumenischer Jugenddienst (Ecumenical Youth Service, or ÖJD) which is, as of 2012, still in operation. First launched in 1956 through the work of the Goßner Mission (a missionary society named after Johannes Evangelista Goßne) and the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches in Geneva (although related to a summer program hosted by the Goßner Mission in Berlin-Karlshorst the previous year), ÖJD is a summer working camp, focusing on socially conscious construction and service projects, that attracts youth from across Europe. In 1957, the Evangelische Jugendkammer-Ost (Evangelical Youth Board [East], a predecessor organization of the KKJ) assumed responsibility for what was then called the Ökumenisches-internationales Aufbaulager in der DDR (Ecumenical-International

98 Jürgen Henkys, "Gemeindepädagogik in der DDR," in *Gemeinde-pädagogisches Kompendium*, ed. G. Adam and R. Lachmann, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), p. 81.

99 KKJ / AadL, "Das Verhalten Junger Erwachsener in ländlichen Kirchengemeinden," 3 May 1974, BEK, B.101/1848, microfiche, EZA.

100 Sharon L. Kegerreis, "A Church within Socialism: Religion in the GDR Today," p. 2, 8 Oct. 1980, Radio Free Europe Research RAD Background Report/240, B. 26/10/22, OSA, Budapest.

Construction Camp in the GDR). In addition to its summer activities, the Aufbaulager also sponsored an Easter Conference, hosting youth from both Eastern and Western Europe. In the years following 1967, after once again changing names (finally assuming the name under which it still operates), the program sponsored eight to ten camps across the GDR, each with as many as 120 to 150 participants, approximately 30-50% of whom came from outside of East Germany.¹⁰¹

2.) The group Berufstätige Jugend (Employed Youth, or BJ) addressed issues considerably more secular than ÖJD – namely, labor and employment – by providing work opportunities and professional contacts for youth across the GDR by accessing the BEK church and parish network. (However, such direct involvement in youth labor brought BJ under intense Stasi surveillance.¹⁰²) The group was also concerned with youth ministry in working class families. A report issued by the offices of the Berufstätige Jugend in Saxony makes reference to the increasing gentrification within Church ranks – it hypothesizes that this class division (from the relative embourgeoisement of the Church) ultimately caused many laborers to feel that their experiences and culture were not represented within the Church. In his analysis, the historian Jürgen Kocha posits that rather than undergoing an embourgeoisement, the Church had never really lost its Bürgertum (bourgeois) character, one that older generation of pastors who entered into the ministry before the war brought with them into the new social context.¹⁰³ In any case, to remedy this, BJ provided pastoral care to youth employed in apprenticeships as well as skilled and unskilled labor, with the end goal of breaking down the class divisions enforced by the current structure of the

101 “Zeittafel der Ökumenischen Jugenddienste,” Ökumenischen Jugenddiensten, accessed 12 Apr. 2012, <<<http://www.ejbo.de/workcamp/index.phplang=DE&help=1&page=viewtext&textid=27&rubrikid=26>>>.

102 Walter Schilling, “Die ‘Bearbeitung’ der Landeskirche Thüringen durch das MfS” in *Die Kirchenpolitik von SED und Staatssicherheit: Eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Clemens Vollnhals, (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1997), p. 233.

103 Kocha, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German Society*, p. 49.

Church, amounting to something of a collectivization in its own ranks.¹⁰⁴

3.) In the years following the Second World War, the Facharbeitskreis für Schülerarbeit (Special Working Group for Student Ministry, or FAK SA) hosted an annual Kirchliche Woche (Church Week) and in 1948, in conjunction with the Church Province of Saxony [Magdeburg] (Kirchenprovinz Sachsen [Magdeburg]), sponsored a celebration of Reformation Sunday over the weekend in Wittenberg. During the late 1940s, attendance at FAK SA events – especially Bible study groups – was particularly high, and the organization maintained contact with similar youth organizations in West Germany. In 1969, FAK SA chose to join in the newly-formed BEK, which provided it a number of advantages, including better integration of its constituent groups and the appointment of two full-time speakers, who toured through the country engaging students in conversations on issues of faith and life.¹⁰⁵ Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, FAK SA provided materials to youth ministers that helped guide discussions on a wide array of topics designed for students in ninth through twelfth grades. These ranged from current events-related discussions (“Faith, science, and the future;”), to question on faith and secularism in socialism (“Spiritual beliefs – critical thinking – spiritual living;” “Christians as a minority”), to the existential (“Do we work to live or live to work?;” “What is a person?;” “Who am I?” – undoubtedly a difficult question for any adolescent).¹⁰⁶

4.) The Mittelstelle für Werk und Feier (Center for Work and Celebration, or WuF) provided various worship materials for church youth groups, including numerous volumes

104 Adam Weyer, Stephan Wippermann-Lins and Monika Lins, *Ordentlich und fleissig arbeiten!: die evangelischen Kirchen und die Arbeitswelt in der SBZ/DDR*, (Duisburg : Gilles & Francke, 1994), p. 105.

105 Maria Stettner, *Missionarische Schülerarbeit*, (Munich: Utz, Wiss., 1999), pp. 95-8.

106 These themes are taken from numerous documents published by the FAK SA between 1976 and 1988. For example, see: FAK SA des BEK, “Modell einer Rüstzeit für Jugendliche (9.-12. Kl.). Thema: 'Wer bin ich?,'” 1976, BEK, MN:0041286, EZA.

of praise and worship music, and religiously-themed skits and one-act plays.¹⁰⁷

5.) While all of these groups had a presence throughout East Germany, it was the Arbeitsgruppe Arbeit auf dem Lande (Working Group for Labor in the Countryside, or AG AadL) whose primary objective was youth ministry in rural parishes. The concerns of AG AadL were at once religious, educational, and economic. In a 1974 document entitled “Entwurf von Antworten auf die Fragen an Werke” (“Draft of Answers on Questions on Works”), the Secretary of AG AadL Werner Seidel clarifies that the organization worked to provide “help for people, especially young people, whose situation (in rural areas) has changed profoundly. Help for those people who, as Christians aware of these changes, organize together and in their place share responsibility.”¹⁰⁸ This profound change, which Seidel refers to only in dates, is the collectivization of land (but also the introduction of the Five Year Plan and related drive toward greater industrialization) – the Arbeitsgruppe recognized that the effects of collectivization were not only economic, but had implications in family life and community dynamics. To address these latter concerns, AG AadL sponsored numerous family outings, summer vacations, and day-trips to Berlin. Farm life is very much dependent upon the successful cooperation of the whole community (whether or not it was organized into the collective) and by bringing it together in this way, it was hoped that such activities could help alleviate some of the tensions and antagonism between established and refugee families that had come to characterize East German village life. Although operating with often severely limited resources (the organization ran at a considerable deficit throughout the 1970s), the Arbeitsgruppe offered forty students every year – selected according to a quota system by Landeskirche (regional Church) – free

¹⁰⁷ For example, the playwright and pastor Dieter Leiber wrote some 25 plays for WuF, beginning in 1977.

¹⁰⁸ KKJ / AG AadL, “Entwurf von Antworten auf die Fragen an Werke, Sonderdienste, Arbeitsgemeinschaften u.d. im Blick auf eine verbindliche Cooperation vom Sekretariat des Bundes,” 1974, BEK, B.143/4, EZA.

enrollment in a yearly Studienkurs (study course) on religious themes.¹⁰⁹

In conjunction with the Studienkurs, the Arbeitsgruppe provided special four-day seminars for ministers and Church members, focusing on topics relating to the experiences of youth in rural parishes, as well as initiating discussion on pastoral care for the parents of adolescents. The issues of concern were broad ranging and at times surprising; in one report, members discuss teen sexuality and state policies regarding sexual education in schools.¹¹⁰ The Arbeitsgruppe was, to speak generally, most concerned with those parishes with populations of fewer than 2000, which in 1975, accounted for 24.6% of the population (totaling some 4.2 million people.)¹¹¹ To ensure that its ministry reached all of those communities for which it was responsible, AG AadL maintained detailed lists of affiliated Jugendpfarrer (youth minister) programs and approximate numbers of employed ministers, illustrated by the following table. (Table 1.)

Table 1: Youth Ministers and Ministries
Associated with the Arbeitsgruppe Arbeit auf dem Lande¹¹²

Parish	Number of Youth Ministers	Target Groups
Saxony (Magdeburg)	150	Kreisjugendpfarrer
Brandenburg	200	Jugendmitarbeiter; Kreisjugendpfarrer; Ephorenkonvente
Mecklenburg	70	Jugendmitarbeiter
Thuringia	100	Jugendpfarrkonferenz; Gruppe Neudietendorf
Saxony (Dresden)	100	—
Greifswald	50	Mitarbeiterkonferenz; Ephorenkonvente; Konsistorium

109 KKJ / AG AadL, [untitled budget report], 15 Jan. 1974, BEK, B.143/4, EZA.

110 For its time, GDR sexual education policy was remarkably progressive. For a discussion of this topic, and how it effects social practice today, see: K. Starke and A.P. Visser, "Sexuality, sexual behavior and contraception in East Germany," *Patient Education and Counseling*, vol. 23, no. 3, July 1994, pp. 217-26.

111 KKJ / AG AadL, "Das Verhalten Junger Erwachsener."

112 KKJ / AG AadL, [untitled meeting record and internal memorandum], 1974, BEK, B.143/4, EZA.

Beginning in 1973, in order to better minister to youth in rural communities, AG AadL conducted extensive demographic research on rural parishes with data divided between those living in villages of more than 300 (comprising 66% of respondents), villages of fewer than 300 (22%), and in unincorporated areas (12%).¹¹³ The results of this study were gathered in 1974 document entitled “Das Verhalten junger Erwachsener in ländlichen Kirchgemeinden” [The Behavior of Young Adults in Rural Parishes], which would inform the writing of the previously-mentioned *Handreichung für die Arbeit mit jungen Erwachsenen in ländlichen Kirchengemeinden*. The 1974 study and corresponding survey evaluates the responses of 232 youth, divide by age (under 18: 75; 18 to 21: 83; 22-25: 45; above 25: 29), gender (113 males; 119 females), and marital status (175 unmarried; 57 married). A table of selected results is reproduced below (Table 2).

Table 2: Selected Responses from 1974 AG AadL Youth Survey
“Das Verhalten junger Erwachsener in ländlichen Kirchgemeinden”

3.1.4. Where do you socialize in your town? [2 answers possible. Top answers given.]		
Private meetings	98 respondents	42%
Within the church	86	37%
With the family	74	32%
3.1.10. The following answers given by respondents when asked what they expected of the Church: [3 answers possible. Top answers given.]		
Commitment to those who need help	114 respondents	49%
Possibility to talk	97	42%
Guidance	88	38%
Possibility for community building	83	36%

From the results of this survey, it is clear that the church was an important meeting point and social space for youth in rural communities: it is listed second-most frequently as a spot for socializing, and nearly half of all respondents state that they value social opportunities

113 KKJ / AG AadL, “Das Verhalten junger Erwachsener.”

provided by the church (that is to say, they expect the church to provide them with the “possibility to talk” and the “possibility for community building.”) What is more interesting about this data are perhaps the noticeable absences: state organizations, such as schools or FDJ (an organization that most respondents were very likely members of) are entirely missing from the list. If rural cultural life was to be rebuilt after succumbing to the combined negative influences of war, mass migration (into and out of the country), the development of new class divisions, and forced collectivization, this interview indicates that it was the Church, and not the state, that could provide the foundation.

II.3. THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF COLLECTIVIZATION

While providing a wealth of information regarding youth attitudes toward in the Church in the mid-1970s, perhaps the more significant objective of this study was an investigation of the effects of collectivization and industrialization on the social and cultural dynamics of rural parishes, especially as they affected rural employment and socioeconomic conditions. (It is interesting to note that the AG AadL shared its name with an agricultural research organization established after the Fourth Congress held in May 1953 by functionaries of the SED as well leading members of the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft [Association for German-Soviet Friendship].¹¹⁴ Whether intentionally or not, this name overlap is suggestive of the degree to which the Church and state pursued parallel projects in rural areas, albeit occasionally opposed.)

Through the 1950s, East Germany's slow (but in the final year of that decade, incredibly rapid) path to collectivization and its attendant effects upon the dynamics of rural life here warrants some comment. As noted earlier, the first steps toward collectivization in

¹¹⁴ Arnd Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft in der kommunistischen Diktatur: Zwangsmodernisierung und Tradition in Brandenburg 1945-1963*, (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 2002), p. 149.

the SBZ was the Bodenreform of 1945. While this policy benefited many of the smaller Altbauern and all of the Neubauern, it was not without problems. As Osmond asserts, “In regions where there had been a mix of large estates and middling-to-large peasant holdings the larger peasants were able to take advantage of the land made available and bolster their own positions.”¹¹⁵ This was of course not the intended outcome of the policy, and in many cases, was only possible because of poor, disorganized, or outright corrupt implementation by local party authorities. In one instance, a 400 acre farm in the Kattkow, Cottbus area was ordered to be redistributed, but the shrewd former steward of the property successfully gamed the system, dividing it between five members of his immediate family. This individual, known only as “Herr H.” in official reports, benefited from his friendship with an SED official, who frequently vacationed on the property.¹¹⁶

In general, the newly established farms tended to be quite small, and as Peter W. Sperlich posits in his *Oppression and Scarcity: The History and Institutional Structure of the Marxist-Leninist Government of East Germany*, “there are some reasons to believe that this was a deliberate creation of uneconomical farms in order to prepare for the collectivization...”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, many of the new owners were inexperienced in agricultural management. But there were other complications as well. With Germany's heavy war losses came a significant gender imbalance; in October 1946, approximately 57% of agricultural laborers were women. Osmond paints a dire situation for those single female refugees who had obtained land in the reform: “sexual violation by the Soviet troops; disputes over property with the party authorities, male relatives and returning husbands;

115 Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 136.

116 “Bericht über einige Zustände im Landkreis Cottbus,” Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisa-tionen der DDR, DY 301/IV-2/7/230, Bundesarchiv, Berlin, in Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 131.

117 Peter W. Sperlich, *Oppression and Scarcity: The History and Institutional Structure of the the Marxist-Leninist government of East Germany and Some Perspectives on Life in a Socialist State*, (West Port, Ct.: Praeger Publishers, 2006), p. 111.

inadequate labour for heavy work; frequently inexperience and poor childcare facilities.”¹¹⁸ Life in the home was scarcely better, with many families cramped into small farm houses or confiscated estates. Additionally, nearly all Neubauern, regardless of gender, faced a similar set of difficulties: “desperate housing conditions and shortages of equipment, livestock, feed, fertiliser and seed.”¹¹⁹ Exacerbating the difficulties of the Neubauern was the fact that many Altbauern regarded them as intruders, and the hostilities between the two divided many northern and eastern villages.

While the position of the larger Altbauern may have been more favorable in 1945, it would become increasingly precarious throughout the decade. In 1948, Ulbricht directed particularly sharp vituperative against this group, likening them to western monopoly capitalists, “the saboteurs of the people's food supply.”¹²⁰ The focus of the Landreform shifted toward breaking up farms between twenty and fifty hectares; this campaign against the larger peasants fulfilled two objectives, removing one more obstacle to complete collectivization of East German agricultural land (an increasingly important part of Ulbricht's agenda), and also establishing a common enemy for Neubauern and smaller Altbauern, whom, the state argued, could be better protected from their encroachment by joining the collective. Starting in 1952-3, Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (Agricultural Production Co-operatives, or LPGs) were established, but the degree of collectivization here was somewhat limited as, “only land was tilled together, and use was made of machine and tractor-lending stations. (These were known as 'Type I' collectives.)”¹²¹ Although farmers were certainly pressured to join “Type I” collectives, the decision to do so was, at least at this time, voluntary.

118 Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 137.

119 *Ibid.*

120 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

121 Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 195.

This choice had implications for the entire family, especially for established Altbauern families, and could become a point of considerable drama. Women in particular resisted collectivization, and there existed a common stereotype, but one with considerable veracity, of “the farmer's wife scolding her husband for coming home from the tavern having promised the family holding to the co-operative and sending him out the next morning to retract...”¹²² But the variations are many: parents withholding a family farm from their children, for fear that it may be given to the collective; children pressuring parents not to collectivize and give away their future inheritance; disagreements between parents and children over whether the latter should seek employment in the country's expanding industrial sector. Even by 1959, only about 45.1% of the agricultural sector claimed membership in LPGs (from approximately 25.2% in 1952).¹²³ This would change following a second phase of collectivization, this time enforced. In the following year, some 85% of all farms were collectivized, reaching virtually 100% in the next few. This process continued throughout the decade – by the end of the 1960s, the majority of LPGs operated as Type III cooperatives, with complete collectivization of machinery and livestock.

It was perhaps an unfortunate coincidence that the first wave of collectivization (1952-3) occurred at a time of considerable economic and political instability.¹²⁴ Although only leading to the partial collectivization of approximately 20% of farms in East Germany, it had an undeniably deleterious effect on productivity. Perhaps the simplest explanation for this decreased productivity was the significant population shift from rural to urban areas (not necessarily in East Germany) that occurred in this year – by April of 1953, a significant

122 Osmond, “From *Junker* estate to co-operative farm,” p. 140.

123 Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany*, (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 192.

124 On 16 July 1953, massive workers' strikes and protests broke out in East Berlin, and the following day, spread to some 500 cities in towns across the country. The uprising of 1953 ultimately halted this first wave of collectivization.

portion of the GDR's arable land lay fallow, and as many as 40% of the country's most prominent farmers had fled to West Germany. The second wave of collectivization brought even problems for the state, as it was met with a larger emigration to West Germany. Before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, those who wished to leave (provided they did not take too many personal belongings) had a relatively simple option to do so: travel to East Berlin, cross over the border into West Berlin, and then proceed on to West Germany.¹²⁵ By 1961, the food situation in East Germany had deteriorated to such a degree that the state was forced to reintroduce food rationing. It would never fully improve: as Sperlich notes, "In 1967 GDR farm productivity was about 66% of that of the FRG. By 1984 this percentage had declined to about 43%."¹²⁶

Despite what these statistics suggest, SED propagandists triumphantly declared that collectivization had inculcated the proper socialist consciousness among the country's farmers, who now felt themselves more closely united with the working class. The following excerpt from a 1984 Autorenkollektiv (collection on writings on a single theme) presents the case for this alleged class solidarity:

The cooperative farmers accept the leading role of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party; they accept the role of the working class to strengthen socialist attitudes among the cooperative farmers; they comprehend the historic mission of the working class, which leads them to a better understanding of socialist achievements and personal identification with them, and to deeper awareness of one's own responsibility for socialist society and in the class conflict with imperialism.¹²⁷

However, the reality that Church movements such as AG AadL describe – and a second organization explored below, Kirche auf dem Land – could not be more different. Whether or not members of rural communities had in fact developed an individual understanding of their unique role in the “class conflict with imperialism,” it seems unlikely that they had

125 Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, p. 195.

126 Sperlich, *Oppression and Scarcity*, p. 111.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

developed any strong sense of unity with the working class. If anything, the social and cultural instability of rural life in the GDR along with a new set of class divisions (along Altbauern and Neubauern lines) seriously impinged upon whatever sense of community the farmers of an individual parish might even feel with one another.

II.4. PASTORAL CARE IN THE COLLECTIVE

While the focus of AG AadL was primarily on youth and young adults, a related organization, the Dienst der Kirche auf dem Land (Office of the Church in the Country, or KadL), organized in the late 1950s and at this point still operating in conjunction with the Kirchenkanzlei für die Gliedkirchen in der DDR (Church Office for the Member Churches of the GDR, or KGD) of the EKD, sought to provide similar services for the larger community. Even before collectivization, KadL organized missions in which ministers would visit groups of rural parishes, hosting week-long Bible study courses, catechism classes, and prayer groups. To give but one example, Pastor Heinrich Baltzer organized some seventy-eight missions in a total of 534 towns over the course of eleven years in the 1950s and 1960s, on most trips visiting eight to fourteen parishes. In each of these parishes, his group performed in-home visits with over 100 members of the community (requiring each to perform no less than 45 individual visits during the course of the week), giving instruction on various religious topics, such as the Decalogue or the Lord's Prayer. "The purpose of these visits," Baltzer clarifies, "is to remind or to confront these families anew with the center of the faith."¹²⁸

Throughout the 1960s, KadL would focus more directly on the attendant social problems stemming from collectivization. In 1964, KadL Oberkirchenamt Hans Jorgen

128 "Das Ziel dieser Besuche ist die Wiedererinnerung oder Neugegenüberstellung dieser Familie mit dem Zentrum des Glaubens." Heinrich Baltzer, "Bericht über die Dorfmissionsarbeit in Mecklenburg," correspondence with Hans Jorgen Behm, 26 July 1960, KadL / EKD Kirchenkanzlei für die Gliedkirchen in der DDR, B.104/140, EZA.

Behm distributed a document focusing entirely on the issue of pastoral care in communities which had undergone collectivization, entitled, *Aufgaben der Ehe- und Familienseelsorge im kollektivierten Dorf* [Responsibilities for the Marriage- and Family-Pastoral Care in the Collectivized Town.]¹²⁹ Behm identifies this moment as a critical point for the Church; its most important task was to facilitate a sense of community and togetherness in the parish. At base, this concerns the simplest and most fundamental social components – in particular, marriage and the family – and how these transformed through a collectivization process that Behm defines as a complete societal restructuring (“...in einem Umstrukturierungsprozeß befinden.”) Regarding marriages, he reflects on the unique difficulties experienced by couples in collectivized town, and in particular, how these concerns should inform the way a pastor addresses concerns many of the basic disagreements that arise within relationships: when to perform a marriage; how to build a sense of partnership when delegating responsibilities in the field at home (particularly important because, as mentioned earlier, many women resisted collectivized work); and even considerations on disagreements regarding when to have children. The *Aufgaben* further provides parenting advice, with considerations on the generational struggles that parents of adolescents may have experienced.

Although facing a set of concerns related to those experienced by the German Protestant Church during the turn-of-the-century, in particular, changing community dynamics in the face of rapid processes of industrialization and urbanization, the Protestant Church in East Germany was additionally forced to address social concerns related to collectivization. All in all, what is remarkable about the Church's strategy in the dealing with the social problems stemming from collectivization is that rather than criticizing the policy outright in an

129 Behm, *Aufgaben der Ehe- und Familienseelsorge*.

extrastructural way (and in this way addressing the cause), rural Churches, perhaps under the lasting influence of their reorientation toward dialectical theology, sought ways to address these symptoms through pastoral care. In this way, youth organizations such as AG AadL and larger Church groups such as KadL demonstrate a continuity of mission with the prewar Dorfkirchenbewegung. But in the new context of the GDR, the Church recognized that in order to provide the help that rural communities needed in this time of nearly constant social upheaval, it would have to address concerns both sacred and secular; indeed, part of its mission was to provide career advice for those youth who came of age when one of the few certainties was a state of economic uncertainty.

CHAPTER III.

PARISHES AND PROTEST GROUPS: THE CHURCH IN UPPER LUSATIA

Arnaud Liszka: *How did the relationship between state and Church configure itself in this municipality?*

Pastor Andreas Rothe, Kreuzkirche (Evangelical-Lutheran Parish of Seifhennersdorf):
Between the town hall and us as pastors, there was an endeavor for openness on both sides. We said to make positions very clear to each other as we perceived them in reality. For example, when the specialized military instruction [Fach Werkunde (WKU)] was introduced, and that it should be graded, we communicated very clearly our concerns to the mayor.¹³⁰

Although they have received little attention from historians, it would be mistaken to assume that the pastors and churches in East Germany's rural communities were either so geographically or intellectually removed from the political developments within East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Halle, and Erfurt that they were somehow unaffected by them. In a recent presentation organized by the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf, "Trying to live in truth: opposition life in Upper Lusatia between 1978 and 1989," its curators seek to address precisely this misconception.

While it may be true that human rights, peace, and environmental activism coalesced and developed into movements around individual churches in East German cities, especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, they were not bound by city limits. Depending upon the interests and needs of individual communities, affiliated groups and chapters formed even within some of the smallest villages in the countryside. The presentation by the Umweltbibliothek depicts this phenomenon in metaphorical terms, likening it to the

¹³⁰ Arnaud Liszka: "Wie hat sich am Ort das Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Kirche gestaltet?" / Pfarrer Andreas Rothe: "Zwischen dem Rathaus und uns als Pfarrer gab es ein Bemühen um Offenheit auf beiden Seiten. Wir sagten uns an machen Stellen einander sehr deutlich die Wahrheit darüber, was wir empfanden. Zum Beispiel, als das Fach Wehrkunde eingeführt wurde und es benotet werden sollte, teilten wir sehr deutlich dem Bürgermeister unsere Bedenken mit." "Die Luft stank, das Wasser auch: Andreas Rothe, geb. 1946, lebt in Torgau," *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben: DDR Südost-Nichtanpassung und Opposition in der Oberlausitz. Interviews.*, ed. Arnaud Liszka, (Dresden: Neisse Verlag, 2009), pp. 61-2.

resonance of an instrument's soundboard after the initial pluck of a string, in that way making the initial pluck more “audible” (that is to say, a critique first made in the city but reiterated by individuals across the country was more likely to be addressed by the state than if it were only made in the city or cities).¹³¹ Perhaps this metaphor should not be extended too far, but it does serve the purpose of clarifying the connectedness rather than the isolation of the rural GDR periphery to its center(s). To give but one example, after the founding of the Umweltbibliothek at East Berlin's Zionskirche in 1986 (facilitated by the same Pastor Hans Simon whose interview with Joppke is analyzed in Chapter I), an additional thirty-five would open across East Germany in the following few years, using this first one as a model.¹³²

III.1. THE CHURCH AND ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE “BLACK TRIANGLE”

For the parishes considered in this chapter, located in the historical region of Oberlausitz (Upper Lusatia, which was, at that time, the south-easternmost region of the country), the most important of these causes was environmentalism, but this was generally understood to address peace and human rights issues as well.¹³³ There was a very clear reason why this was the case. As William Markham explains in his *Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany: Hardy Survivors in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, “By the early 1960s, the GDR's emphasis on economic growth had led to both a somewhat higher standard of living

131 “Die Provinzen waren in gewisser Weise, summarisch betrachtet, der Ressonanzboden für die Saitenanschläge der oppositionellen Bestrebungen und Aktivitäten in den Zentren der DDR. Ohne diese Ressonanz, ohne die Bereitschaft zur Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Regionen und den Zentren wäre der oppositionelle Widerstand weder so effizient noch so gefährlich für die SED-Oberen gewesen.” [“In summary, the provinces were in this way the soundboard for the string plucks of the oppositional efforts and activities in the centers of the GDR. Without this resonance, without the preparedness for collaboration between the regions and the centers, the oppositional protests would have neither been so efficient nor so dangerous for the SED-leadership.”] “Wanderausstellung 'Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben,’” Umweltbibliothek Grosshennersdorf (see p. 26, fn. 25).

132 *Ibid.*

133 Christian Halbrock, “Die unabhängigen Umweltgruppen der DDR: Forschungsstand und Überblick,” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung Deutschland Archiv, 15 Dec. 2011, accessed 29 May 2012, <<<http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/61423/umweltgruppen?p=all>>>.

and to rapidly increasing environmental degradation.”¹³⁴ Lignite (or soft coal), East Germany's only natural energy source, was largely to blame for this latter problem. Despite the fact that lignite is highly polluting, the GDR conducted strip mining operations on a massive scale to extract its reserves in the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) in Upper Lusatia, and until the 1970s, it was used almost exclusively for both home heating and generation of electricity. The consequences of this energy policy were readily apparent. Atmospheric sulfur dioxide contamination and acid rain became a problem throughout the country, but its effects were especially deleterious in the Erzgebirge, where the polluted air, trapped by the topography of the mountains themselves, accelerated the pace of deforestation already initiated by mining practices. This was not just a concern for the GDR, but rather for all countries within the infamous “black triangle,” including Poland and Czechoslovakia, and persisted well into the 1990s, at which time “more than 60 percent of all forests had been damaged by pollution [amounting to] more than 50,000 ha of dead forest hav[ing] been cleared, and about 1,000 ha [currently] being deforested each year.”¹³⁵

By 1970, recognizing the need for greater environmental protection and energy reform, the SED introduced a round of sweeping new land use legislation intended to “develop the landscape in a manner that would simultaneously increase agricultural and industrial production, beautify it, provide recreational opportunities, and ensure nature protection.”¹³⁶ To achieve this, the state designated large regions for protection while at the same time reforming agricultural practices (regarding use of fertilizers, implementation of erosion controls, etc.), setting limits on water pollution and industrial emissions, and improving methods of waste disposal and water treatment. Two years later, it also

134 William T. Markham, *Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany: Hardy Survivors in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), p. 131.

135 Petr Pavlinek and John Pickles, *Environmental Transitions: Transformation and Ecological Defence in Central and Eastern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 59.

136 Markham, *Environmental Organizations in Modern Germany*, p. 132.

established an environmental ministry, which Markham notes was no less than fourteen years earlier than the creation of a similar agency in West Germany.¹³⁷ Despite these efforts, obtaining sufficient funds to actually enforce policy was a perpetual obstacle, and local offices of the ministry routinely operated with only the most limited resources and staffing—the state became increasingly dependent upon volunteer scientists and advisers to monitor conditions. In all, despite what seemed like a well-intentioned policy ultimately “treated nature protection not as an absolute priority, but as part of an ensemble of land-use planning goals,” meaning that “in practice nature protection was often subordinated to agriculture and industry as the government attempted to ensure its legitimacy by providing its citizens with a standard of living more comparable to their cousins in the Federal Republic.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, although the state attempted to wean itself off of its dependence upon soft coal by importing oil beginning in the late 1960s, price fluctuations, especially severe in the middle years of the following decade, frequently meant that this cleaner energy source was too expensive for practical use.

Without an efficacious policy to address the root causes of pollution or one that enforced necessary protections against careless industrial practice, environmental conditions within the cities of Upper Lusatia and the ecology of the surrounding landscape continued to deteriorate. The environmental cause was taken up by a number of loosely affiliated groups throughout the rural villages, towns, and small cities of Upper Lusatia.¹³⁹ Although these

137 *Ibid.*

138 *Ibid.*

139 This is of course not an exhaustive list, but some of the most significant in the region of Upper Lusatia are as follows: the Offener Friedenskreis Großhennersdorf (Open Peace Circle Großhennersdorf); the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf; the Friedensgruppe Zittau (Peace Group Zittau); the Umweltgruppe Zittau (Environmental Group Zittau); the Umweltgruppe Görlitz (Environmental Group Görlitz); the Ökologiekreis Görlitz (Ecology Circle Görlitz); the Arbeitskreis für Umwelt und Frieden Hoyerswerda (Working Circle for Environment and Peace Hoyerswerda). Nearly all of these, with the notable exception of the Umweltbibliothek (which will be discussed later in the chapter), were sponsored by a local church parish. For a brief description of most of the above organizations, see: “Begriffserklärung,” *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben.*, ed. Liszka, pp. 431-40.

organizations were, by and large, modeled after those first founded in East Berlin, Jena, and Leipzig, this does not mean that they were any less committed their goals or inventive in the ways that they pursued reform on the regional and national level. If anything, because environmental damage was so readily apparent, more Upper Lusatian pastors were willing to lend their voices and give their support to the demands for reform made by opposition groups. It would, however, be mistake to suggest that there was no conflict regarding how local Church authorities should respond when community members approached them for aid in establishing working groups or arranging meeting places; it was certainly not guaranteed that officials would agree. Instead, in some cases, pastors from individual parishes acted on their own accord to make these resources available. Furthermore, as rural communities varied widely throughout the GDR, it is difficult to say how representative these parishes are for all Protestant Churches in rural East Germany – certainly the intense focus upon environmental issues in Upper Lusatia was a unique consequence of the problems in this area – but what is typical for the whole of the country is the complex, at times ambivalent way the Church responded to outside requests for aid.

Environmental (but also peace, human rights, and anti-war) protest, at least in the East German case, may seem like an exclusively extrastructural form of dissent. In many cases, this was true; especially in the concluding days of 1989, environmental groups, whether Church sponsored or not, took their grievances against the state directly into the streets. In one particularly dramatic scene, played out in first few weeks of 1990, public protests reversed a widely unpopular policy wherein the cash-strapped state annually imported approximately 5.5 million tons of garbage per annum (including about 100,000 tons of toxic waste, e.g. “paints, solvents, oils and asbestos-laced cement” as well as “industrial and sewage sludge”). 80% of this waste originated in West Berlin and West

Germany, with Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, and Austria rounding out the remaining 20%. Over the fifteen years in which these contracts were in place, the state brought in what would be valued today at €840 million in hard currency. This was just one of a number of grievances that citizens groups and activists brought against the Minister für Umweltschutz und Wasserwirtschaft (Minister of Environmental Protection and Water Management) Hans Reichelt, whom critics faulted for not asserting a strong enough position for environmental protection against the SED's short-sighted land use policy, rendering the country one of the most polluted in the former Eastern bloc. Under such pressure, Reichelt retired on 9 January 1990, officially citing old age; he had recently turned 65.¹⁴⁰

There were important intrastructural aspects as well, with the Church acting as mediator between protest groups and state officials. For example, to return to the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, Pastor Andreas Rothe of the Evangelical-Lutheran Kreuzkirche in the parish of Seifhennersdorf, a town of about 4,000, attests that during his time as a Jugendpfarrer, he maintained close contact with the mayoral office of the city, and in general the two institutions operated with a policy of open dialogue. Rothe here refers to a specific time when he and his fellow pastors used this positive relationship with town hall to express their objections to the WKU; in this way, individual church members could use their position between protest groups and local party officials to help influence change, or at the very least, articulate in a semi-official way the concerns of their parishioners to more or less receptive political figures. In this specific case, there were instances of disagreement between the mayor and the pastors of the Kreuzkirche, but these were not generally on pacifist or environmental issues, but rather blocks placed against the Church, limiting its

140 Tony Czuczka, "Citizen Protest Cuts Lucrative Shipments of Foreign Waste with AM-East Germany," *AP News Archive*, 26 Jan. 1990, accessed 30 May 2012, <<<http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1990/Citizen-Protest-Cuts-Lucrative-Shipments-Of-Foreign-Waste-With-AM-East-Germany/id-9f73a423814b258ea26b43c827261905>>>.

ability to construct new worship spaces.¹⁴¹ At least in this scenario, the Church was better able to speak on the behalf of its affiliated protest groups than on its own.

III.2. THE *LAUSITZBOTIN* AND RURAL SAMIZDAT LITERATURE

While there may be some 250 kilometers separating East Berlin from Großschönau, a town of about 6,000 near the German-Czech-Polish border, the connection between the capital and this community played an vital role in the establishment one of the most important environmental magazines in the GDR. The *Lausitzbotin* [Lusatia Messenger] was first published in a run of 200 copies in January 1989 and under the aegis of the the Zittau regional chapter of the Grün-ökologisches Netzwerk “Arche” in der Evangelischen Kirche (Green-Ecological Network “Ark” in the Evangelical Church), largely with the aid of materials obtained in this rural south-eastern town. By that time, “Arche” had become a GDR-wide organization, founded one year prior by Carlo Jordan of the Umweltbibliothek Berlin (who would later go on to establish the first Green Party in the GDR in 1989), in order to better facilitate the organization of environmental activity within the Church. At least in this one case, Großschönau's distance proved to be an advantage.

In either the fall of 1987 or the winter of 1988, Andreas Schönfelder, who was at this time employed by the Church as a disability support worker in the Evangelisches Behindertenheim (Evangelical Home for the Disabled) “Katharinenhof” in Großhenndorf, solicited support from within the church community in order to publish a magazine, one that would both address the dire environmental situation in Upper Lusatia as well as serve as a communication letter for the Lusatian opposition groups “from Zittau to Hoyerswerda.”¹⁴² Earlier that year, Schönfelder had played a central role in the

141 “Die Luft stank, das Wasser auch,” *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben.*, ed.. Liska, p. 62.

142 Roland Brauckmann, “Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit. Die unabhängige

establishment of a regional Umweltbibliothek, located in the small village of Großhennersdorf, numbering some 1,500 inhabitants and positioned between the cities of Zittau and Löbau. Taking the environmental library at the Zionskirche in Berlin as his model, Schönfelder appealed to the Church Superintendent in Zittau, and former Dresdner Oberlandkirchenrat für ökumenische Kontakte (Dresden High Provincial Church Counsel for Ecumenical Contact) Pastor Dietrich Mendt, for approval to set up such a facility under the auspices of his office. It was originally Schönfelder's idea to put the library within two rooms of his own home, for which the church would pay him rent. One member of the office agreed to this plan, but Mendt interceded and prevented it from going through, arguing that it required the approval of a different Superintendent. However, the situation was not resolved after meeting with this second official; in an interview with Liszka, Schönfelder and another activist posit that this was probably due to the fact that many in Zittau assumed that all of Großhennersdorf was in collaboration with Stasi.¹⁴³ (This assumption was not without some merit; Roland Brauckmann lists three particularly involved IMs from this small village, and there were likely many more whose work with the MfS was not quite as extensive as these three.¹⁴⁴)

Schönfelder once again turned to Mendt for support, and this time, the Superintendent was more accepting, suggesting that rooms could be acquired within the parish of Zittau. This offer was extended, however, with the condition that the Bibliothek cleared all of its activities with the Church council, in essence, giving editorial control over the group to Mendt himself. The details of this arrangement were to be made with one Dr. Trogisch, but in the end, because of a failure of action on the part of the Superintendent's

Zeitschrift 'Lausitzbotin' als Katalysator der Wende," in *Die DDR – Erinnerung an einen untergegangenen Staat*, ed. Heiner Timmermann, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999), p. 268.

143 "Außerkirchliche Opposition: Andreas Schönfelder, Thomas Pilz, Thomas Hönel," *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben*, ed. Liszka, p. 275.

144 Brauckmann, "Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit," p. 265.

office, these plans fell through as well. After a final appeal to Pastor Johannes Rau, the Dresden Oberlandeskirchenrat, and yet another rejection (albeit tacit; Rau failed to ever respond to the request), Schönfelder chose to establish the library anyway, without the support of the Church. It should be noted that while the focus of the library was on environmental issues, its holdings were not limited topically. Rather, it featured a wide array of information on opposition movements and materials engaging in critical discussion on social and political themes.¹⁴⁵

His efforts in finding and securing adequate machinery and printing supplies from the Church for his planned magazine nearly failed as well, but an individual parish (and a pastor who put himself at considerable risk with both the Church and state) would eventually come through. At that time, none of the larger churches he approached were willing to take on the responsibility (and legal ownership) of the magazine. But if the struggle over the Umweltbibliothek is any indication, Schönfelder was not one who was so easily dissuaded. In the summer of 1988, after contacting a church office in Berlin, Schönfelder received word that there existed an outmoded but still functional wax-matrix printing press (Wachsmatrizenabzugsgerät) dating back to the 1930s located in the parish offices of Großschönau that had somehow managed to go undiscovered by the state and was thus unregistered. The local minister, Alfred Hempel, expressed his sympathies for the cause of the Umweltbibliothek, and granted Schönfelder and his colleague at the Katharinenhof, Thomas Pilz, permission to use of the press.¹⁴⁶

145 Blanca Meinel, *Politische Samisdatliteratur in der DDR: Die Bedeutung der Öffentlichkeit für die Verwirklichung des Ziele des politischen Zeitschriftsamisdat der DDR am Beispiel der Umweltbibliothek Berlin*, (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2009), p. 17.

146 Pilz is the son of Pastor Günter Pilz, who served the congregation at the Kirche Mittelherwigsdorf, a parish of less than 4,000. The elder Pilz was something of a difficult personality, and while his public acts indicate that he sincerely believed in pacifist causes (he even refused to allow his son to enroll in FDJ), he was later found to have been a member of a special class of IMs known as the Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter der Abwehr mit Feindverbindung (unofficial [civilian] informant of the defense with connection to the enemy, or IMB). Brauckmann, "Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit," p. 266. In total, there were

However, there were still obstacles. Neither Schönfelder nor Pilz wanted to go through the lengthy process of obtaining approval for the content in the magazine from the parish council (a process that yielded very disappointing results the last time Schönfelder approached them), and instead, reached out to “Arche,” which was already involved in the publication of its own samizdat magazine, *Arche Nova* [New Ark].¹⁴⁷ Publishing in Zittau, Schönfelder reasoned, was likely safer than in East Berlin (a massive Stasi raid took place in the Umweltbibliothek of that city less than one year prior, on 24 November 1987), and so he approached the regional chapter of the organization. Finally, in the autumn of that year, three young authors, all in their early twenties (including Pilz, Thomas Hönel, and Eckhart Junghans), began work in earnest on the content of the magazine. A mockup draft was prepared by December and this first edition of the *Lausitzbotin* was printed in the evenings in Pilz's living room in Mittelherwigsdorf; its lead story, “Zittauer Luftsituation” [Zittau's Air Situation] addressed the persistent pollution issues in the “black triangle,” the lack of reliable statistics on air quality in the regional city, and the overall failures of GDR environmental policy.¹⁴⁸ Additional sections of the magazine described the food and nutrition situation in Romania, contained a Soviet glasnost essay on the topic of “socialist pluralism,” and, in a daring essay entitled “Leipzig im Januar” (“Leipzig in January”) spoke on the human rights situation in the GDR, in particular focusing on the arrests of two Leipzig seminarians, Uwe Schwabe and Rainer Müller.¹⁴⁹

fewer than 3,900 IMBs, and their assignments were quite specialized, often to investigate the activities of a specific person, and most frequently one directly involved in the opposition or protest movements. Miller, *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance*, pp. 4. As a final note, Liszka's volume contains an extensive interview with the younger Pilz, detailing both his life and his experiences with various environmental groups in and around Upper Lusatia. See: “Ich wurde offiziell als Klassenfeind titulierte: Thomas Pilz, geb. 1965, lebt in Mittelherwigsdorf,” *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben*, ed. Liszka, pp. 218-228.

147 “Arche [Grün-ökologisches Netzwerk 'Arche' in der Evangelischen Kirche],” *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben*, ed. Liszka, p. 431.

148 “Lausitzbotin,” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft, Sep. 2008, accessed 25 May 2012, <<<http://www.jugendopposition.de/index.php?id=1451>>>.

149 Brauckmann, “Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit,” p. 269.

Obtaining enough paper for the twenty-two page work¹⁵⁰ also posed challenges, not the least of which was that a suitable stock was in short supply (at least in Mittelherwigsdorf), but also because the authors did not want to raise suspicion by buying all of the paper at once. The press itself was quite simplistic technologically, and was only able to print one-sided copy. Finally published in January of the following year, the *Lausitzbotin* indicates at the top of the page that it is “Herausgegeben in der Region Lausitz im Grünen Netzwerk Arche in den Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR” (“Issued in the Lausitz Region by the Green Network “Arche” in the Evangelical Church in East Germany”) and like all “Arche” publications, it is marked “nur für den innerkirchlichen Dienstgebrauch” (“only for inter-Church use”).

While Großschönau's somewhat removed position from East Berlin may have in some ways proved advantageous, helping to keep a printing press from the eyes of the Stasi, it was not so far that the magazine's distribution would go unnoticed. Almost as soon as the *Lausitzbotin* began circulating, MfS agents discovered it and collected whatever copies they could find. Schönfelder and his group also had to contend with an extremely displeased Superintendent Mendt. The first copies of the work were given to “Arche,” and in February, Pilz and Hönel divided a portion of the remaining copies between pastoral offices in Zittau. The Superintendent was incensed by this discovery; four days later, in retaliation, he insisted that the text “Available at the Pastoral Offices” (“Erhältlich bei den Pfarrämtern”) be stricken from the masthead. Four days after this, three ministers met with representatives from Großhennersdorf and Zittau environmental and pacifist groups, who recommended that Mendt exercise better restraint.¹⁵¹

150 There is some disagreement over the length of the work – various sources claim it was either twenty-two or twenty-four pages. Cf. *Lausitzbotin*, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung and Brauckmann, “Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit,” p. 269.

151 Brauckmann, “Der Zittauer Aufstand gegen staatliche Verlogenheit,” p. 269.

In an interview conducted over a decade later with Oberlandeskirchenrat Rau, the official suggests that Mendt's anger was not necessarily related to the content of the *Lausitzbotin*, affirming that, “[Mendt] contradicted the state very strongly.”¹⁵² Rather, he suggests that the Superintendent objected most vociferously to the fact that Schönfelder (with assistance from Hempel) had undertaken the entire project without communicating his intentions to Mendt's office, nor submitting the material for review. Rau's complete lack of sympathy for Schönfelder is somewhat surprising; his office was well known for the extensive support and advice it provided for pacifists and would-be contentious objectors, or Bausoldaten (construction soldiers).

Eventually, the crisis came to a close with an agreement between the Church council and the editors of the *Lausitzbotin*: the Church would take over control of the publication of the magazine. Schönfelder would maintain editorial control, so long as the main topics were arranged with the council beforehand. However, these regulations did not sit well with Schönfelder, who, foregoing the protections that the Church could provide, decided to print the *Lausitzbotin* according to his own standards. Rather than following the stipulated guidelines to only address one topic and keep to less than six pages, the team prepared an eleven-page work covering East Germany's rigged elections in their 2 July 1989 special edition. In order to avoid the attention of the Stasi, Hempel's printing press would be rotated through the houses of the magazine's editorial team; the 300 copies of the magazine were printed in Hönel's living room in Zittau.

Although individual churches maintained productive relationships with many protest oriented groups, and in this way engaged and facilitated extrastructural dissent, their collaboration was not always problem free. Throughout Upper Lusatia, the particularly dire

152 “Er widersprach dem Staat sehr stark.” “Das Zeugnis der Christen war gefordert: Johannes Rau, 1924-2004,” *Versuche, in der Wahrheit zu leben*, ed. Liszka, p. 19.

environmental situation brought about by aggressive industrial and mining activity helped rally both the Church and dissidents around this cause, and in the late 1980s, there was a flourishing of ecological work through the Church; for many, the model was the Umweltbibliothek in Berlin. Even so, there existed potential for disagreement within the Church itself. Few cases can illustrate this better than that of the *Lausitzbotin*: two Church employees (Schönfelder and Pilz) receive the approval and support of a parish pastor (Hempel) to publish an environmental bulletin under the auspices of a Church-affiliated organization (“Arche”), but in doing so, are reprimanded and censured by a Church official (Superintendent Mendt), who ultimately capitulates, with conditions. If the rural parishes were the soundboards for the urban centers, as the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf has so colorfully described, they were certainly capable of a few sour notes. In any case, individual church activity defies any attempt at simple description along oppositional or collaborationist lines.

CONCLUSION.

While the juxtaposition of figures such as Oskar Brüsewitz and Johannes Hempel, Otto Dibelius and Moritz Mitzenheim, or Joachim Gauck and Manfred Stolpe might provide for a particularly dramatic narrative on the relationship between the Protestant Church and the state in East Germany, constructing a history in this manner focuses only on the structural tensions within the Church and provides no insight into the interior tensions within each of these ministers as they tried to reconcile their faith with their hopes for the state (in an admittedly limiting political milieu). When journalists and academics employ the opposition-collaboration binary, they ultimately objectify the Church, concealing its human element (i.e. how individual ministers engaged in, to borrow the language of Boobbyer, moral transactions with the state) for the sake of a simplistic and convenient narrative that can rationalize the behavior of the entire Church without needing to really consider any of the individuals of which it is constituted.

Indeed, this binary even simplifies the analysis of official Church policy, which, when evaluated within its proper context, often reveals a much more ambivalent position than the binary can adequately describe—that is to say, the actions of the Church and its members are by and large neither collaborationist nor oppositional, but rather possess aspects of each. For example, in my study BEK programs directed toward rural parishes, particularly its organizations *Arbeitsgruppe Arbeit auf dem Lande* and *Kirche auf dem Land*, it could be said that these were ultimately collaborationist as they made little or no effort to challenge collectivization politically (some individual ministers may have voiced concerns, but this was not at all part of these groups' work). However, understanding the historical relationship of East German rural church movements to the prewar *Dorfkirchenbewegung*,

particularly after its turn toward dialectical theology, clarifies how the Church understood religiously based social outreach as a way to improve the condition of “villages in crisis;” such an intrastructural approach, even if only effecting change in the smallest of ways, could very well be considered dissent, especially as it was in competition with the state's attempts to inculcate the desired socialist mind within the rural population.

The Church engaged in more explicitly extrastructural forms of dissent through its outreach with pacifist, environmental, and human rights activists and groups. This was especially true on the level of the individual parish, where church leaders generally had sufficient flexibility to make resources available to those whose causes they were sympathetic. However, occasionally complicating these relations were regional Church offices that, in the interest of not raising the suspicions of the MfS, would outright discourage these kinds of arrangements.

While I fully acknowledge that this thesis represents only a first step into the study of the Protestant Church in rural areas of East Germany, it is nevertheless valuable to admit its limitations and posit where such research may open new considerations. My conscious choice to not include a parallel study of the Catholic Church was one related to time and material limits imposed upon this particular academic outing; a rather promising extension of this project would be a comparative study of religion in the rural parishes of the GDR.

Similarly, due to the constraints of this specific project, I was unable to amass a sufficient body of resources to trace larger trends in the way that protest organizations formed across rural East Germany, and how these developed according to the unique needs of the local population. My consideration of individual parish outreach, here on Upper Lusatia, was chosen because of the relatively easy access I had to the materials published and produced by the Umweltbibliothek Großhennersdorf. Of course, similar projects can be

undertaken on all regions of the GDR, and perhaps it is only through such an endeavor that a truly holistic view of the various expressions of protest and dissent and their relationships with local churches can be gained.

But as the Church is ultimately comprised of individual ministers and parishioners, perhaps the most promising new avenue would be to bring a critical engagement of the methodology of oral history to this topic, one which is cognizant of the theoretical burden packed into the very language of this field of study (i.e. *dissent* and *opposition*) and rather, like Boobbyer, seeks to engage church members on the terms of their own moral biographies; that is to say, to pay special focus on how an individual's changing moral contract with the state could produce a sufficiently fluid moral system so that even the smallest, most intrastructural form of dissent could be considered as such if the subject so wished it to be. The opposition-collaboration binary provides no justification or rationalization for behavior of individual ministers; as a methodology, oral history is in a privileged position to access precisely these two internal processes.

In all, it is clear that work on the Protestant Church in rural East Germany is far from complete; if anything, it seems that much of the most exciting research in this field has yet to be undertaken.

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